

# Dark Secret

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Fleming



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# THE DARK SECRET

BY

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GYPSY QUEEN'S VOW," "THE MIDNIGHT QUEEN," ETC.

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# CONTENTS.

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| CHAPTER                                     | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------------|------|
| I. The Mermaid.....                         | 5    |
| II. The Lone House.....                     | 20   |
| III. An Escape.....                         | 31   |
| IV. Fontelle.....                           | 41   |
| V. Jack De Vere.....                        | 51   |
| VI. The Secret.....                         | 60   |
| VII. The Midnight Music.....                | 70   |
| VIII. The Vendetta.....                     | 80   |
| IX. Jacinto.....                            | 90   |
| X. A Mystery.....                           | 105  |
| XI. Captain Disbrowe makes a Discovery..... | 119  |
| XII. A Strange Meeting.....                 | 131  |
| XIII. Unmasked.....                         | 146  |
| XIV. Pride and Passion.....                 | 156  |
| XV. A Queen Uncrowned.....                  | 175  |
| XVI. The Story in the Lone Inn.....         | 191  |
| XVII. The End of the Story.....             | 202  |
| XVIII. A Woman's Nature.....                | 215  |
| XIX. Little Orrie.....                      | 226  |
| XX. A Proud Heart Crushed.....              | 231  |
| XXI. "He Giveth his Beloved Sleep,".....    | 243  |



| CHAPTER                               | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| XXII. The Lonely Grave.....           | 260  |
| XXIII. Over the Sea.....              | 274  |
| XXIV. Norma .....                     | 284  |
| XXV. Off with the Old Love.....       | 298  |
| XXVI. A Secret Sorrow.....            | 306  |
| XXVII. Resurgam .....                 | 323  |
| XXVIII. The Actress and the Earl..... | 331  |
| XXIX. An Old Foe.....                 | 342  |
| XXX. "All Things hath an End.".....   | 351  |



# THE DARK SECRET.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MERMAID.

“Whoe’er has travel’d life’s dull round,  
Where’er his stages may have been,  
May sigh to think he still has found  
His warmest welcome at an inn.”

SHENSTONE.

THE time—late in the evening of a raw April day, many a year, most probably, before you were born, my dear sir or madam. The scene a long bleak stripe of coast on the Jersey shore, washed by the bright waters of the flowing Hudson.

A low, black, rakish-looking schooner, with a sort of suspicious look about it, strikingly suggestive to nautical individuals skilled in reading the expressive countenances of schooners in general, had just come to anchor out in the river, a short distance from the shore; and a boat, a few minutes after, had put off from her, and landed two persons, who sprung lightly out; while two more, who had rowed them, leaned on their dripping oars, and waited, as if for further directions.

“You can go back, now. I don’t want you to wait for me. I’ll stop at the Mermaid to-night. If I want you, you know the signal; and tell Sharp Bill to keep an uncommon sharp look-out. Come, my little Spanish Jockey o’ Norfolk; put your best leg foremost, hoist all sail, and let’s bear down on that full-blown craft, Bob Rowlie, of the Mermaid inn.”

The speaker gave his companion a blow on the back, at this passage in his discourse, that sent him reeling, as

well it might ; and then, with a coarse laugh, sprung, with more agility than might have been expected from his looks, over the wet, shingly, slippery beach, toward the high-road.

He was a man of some forty-five or fifty years of age, short, brawny and muscular, though not stout, with an extremely large head, set on an extremely short neck, which made up in thickness what it wanted in length. A complexion like unvarnished mahogany, with a low, retreating forehead ; a pair of sharp, keen, glittering, hawk-like eyes, gleaming from under thick, scowling brows ; a grim, resolute mouth, expressive of the most unflinching do-or-die determination, made up a face that would hardly be associated, in female minds, with the idea of love at first sight. This elegant frontispiece was rendered still further attractive by a perfect forest of underbrush and red hair generally ; indeed, there was more hair about his countenance than there seemed any real necessity for ; and his tarpaulin hat crowned a head adorned with a violent mat of hair of the same striking color. The gentleman was dressed in an easy, off-hand style, that completely set at defiance all established civilized modes, with nothing about him, save his sailor's hat, to betoken he was a seaman. Yet such he was, and a captain, too : Captain Nicholas Tempest, commander of the *Fly-by-Night*, at your service, reader.

A greater contrast to the gentleman just described than his companion, could hardly have been found, search the wide world over. He was a slender lad, of not more than sixteen or seventeen apparently, with a face that would have been feminine in its exquisite beauty, but for the extreme darkness of the complexion. Every feature was perfect, as faultlessly chiseled as if modeled after some antique statue. His eyes were large, black and lustrous as diamonds ; his short, crisp, curling hair, of jetty blackness ; while his complexion was darker than that of a Creole. His form was slight, graceful and elegant ; his dress odd, picturesque, and foreign-looking, and strikingly becoming to the dark, rich style of his beauty. A crimson sash was knotted carelessly round his waist ; and a cap of the same color, with a gold band and tassel,

and a single black plume, was set jauntily on his dark curls, and gave him altogether the look of a handsome little brigand, just dressed for the stage.

The burly commander of the Fly-by-Night sprung fleetly up the rocks, followed by the boy, until they left the beach, and struck out on the straggling, unfrequented, lonely-looking road, with only one house in sight, as far as the eye could reach, and that one a low, dingy-looking place, with a black, smoky chimney leaning pensively to one side, and two vacant-eyed windows, that stared straight before them with an idiotic, helpless-looking gape, and a melancholy old door, that creaked and moaned dismally whenever it was touched. Over this door was a flapping sign, with an uncomfortable-looking female painted on it, who held a comb in one hand, and a small pocket mirror in the other, into which she was gazing with an expression of the most violent astonishment, evidently lost in wonder as to how on earth she had ever got there—as she very well might, indeed; for it was an uncomfortable, not to say distressing, place for anybody to be, much less a mermaid. A striking trait about this lady was, that after beginning like any other reasonable Christian, she suddenly and impetuously, and without the smallest provocation, saw fit to branch off into a startling tail, which turned up so that the tip stood on a level with her head, and left her precisely in the shape of the letter U. Under this extraordinary female was painted, in glaring, yellow capitals, “The Mermaid”; and there was a popular legend extant, to the effect that the picture above was a striking likeness of one of those fishy individuals that had been captured by a former proprietor of the inn, while she was combing her sea-green tresses down on the shore. For the truth of the narrative I am not, however, prepared to vouch in this authentic story, as I have only popular tradition for it.

Toward this inviting-looking dwelling, our two “solitary travelers” were betaking themselves, at a leisurely pace, each seemingly absorbed in his own thoughts. Captain Nicholas Tempest, having insinuated about half a yard of twisted tobacco into his mouth, was discharging right and left, with that benign expression of countenance



men always wear when chewing the weed ; and with both hands thrust in his trousers pockets, he marched along with an independent swagger, that said, as plainly as words : " I'm Captain Nick Tempest, sir, and I don't care a curse for any man ! " His handsome companion kept by his side, stepping carefully to avoid the mud, lest it should sully the shining brightness of his Spanish leather boots, and smiling slightly as he caught the contemptuous glances Captain Tempest cast toward him, as he observed the action. And thus, one chewing tobacco and plowing his way straightforwardly along, in free and easy scorn of mud and dirt, and the other stepping daintily, and springing over holes and puddles, they marched along in silence for a season.

Captain Nicholas Tempest, transferring his quid, with an adroit roll of the tongue that bespoke long and accomplished practice, to the other cheek, and having discharged a startling fire of tobacco-juice, gave his pantaloons a hoist and glancing toward his companion, at length lifted up his voice and spoke.

" Well, my little shaver, you've got to America, at last, you see, all safe in wind and limb ; though, by George, we did come pretty near going to Davy's locker once or twice during the passage. And now what do you think of it, eh ? Hardly equal to the ' vine-clad hills of sunny Spain,' you see, my lad. Rather a dreary and desolate prospect, just at present, ain't it ? "

" Yes, somewhat so," said the lad, as he measured intently with his eye a pool of water in his path, and then leaped lightly over it. His voice was soft and musical in the extreme, and was rendered still more so by his foreign accent, though he spoke in excellent English.

" And now that you've got here, Master Jacinto, what do you mean to do with yourself, if it's a fair question ? "

" Perfectly fair, Captain Tempest. I mean to take excellent care of myself," said the lad, carelessly.

" Humph ! you do—do you ? Boys have queer notions about taking care of themselves. I suppose your next move will be for New York city."

" That depends."

" Depends on what ? "



"Well, on a good many things generally, and on one thing in particular."

"And what is that one thing? Don't be so cursed secretive, you little jackanape! I tell you what, my young cove, you had better keep on the right side of me; for it will be the tallest feather in your cap, if you have the friendship of Captain Nick Tempest. Mind that!"

"I am much obliged to Captain Nick Tempest, and would not offend him for any earthly consideration," said the young Spaniard, in a tone of provoking indifference, as he tightened his sash: "but, at the same time, he must allow me to decline making him my *confidant*, more especially as it is totally out of his power to aid me in the slightest degree."

Captain Nick Tempest came to a sudden halt, and with his hands still in his pockets, faced round in the middle of the road, his swarthy face flushed, and his brows contracting with rising anger; but, as his eyes fell on the slight, boyish form of the other, he checked himself, and said, in a tone of withering scorn, as he moved on:

"Why, what an independent young gentleman we have here, so self-conscious and wise that he declines all help, and is going to begin life in a land he never set foot in before, on the principal of letting every tub stand on its own bottom. If you were a dozen years older, I would twist your neck for you, for your insolence. A Spaniard more or less is no great loss in the world; and I have settled the hash of many a better man than you will ever be for less than that!"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it, sir," said the lad, with so ready an acquiescence as to sound like flattery, while a slight and almost imperceptible smile broke for an instant over his handsome face.

"Oh, you hav'n't!" growled Captain Nick, slightly mollified. "Well then, let me give you a piece of friendly advice: don't attempt to provoke Captain Tempest. You had a passage over in my bark, and we've broken bread together, and been good friends all along, and I don't know but what I kinder liked you: but still I tell you, as a friend, don't provoke me, Master Jacinto."

"Really, Captain Tempest, I had no intention of of-

fending you, and regret exceedingly having done so," said the youth, bowing deprecatingly; "but the fact is, I could not, if I would, tell you my plans; for I do not know myself, having formed none as yet. Most likely I shall do as I have always done—trust to luck, and let to-morrow take care of itself."

"A mighty profitable maxim, and a beautiful way of passing through life," said the captain, with a sneer. "Trust to luck, indeed, the slippery jade! No, sir, I wouldn't trust her the length of my nose, and that's none of the longest either."

"Providence, then, if you like that better. Don't you trust in Providence?" said the boy.

"Providence!" said Captain Nick, jerking out his tobacco, with a look of utter contempt. "Paugh! don't make me sick. I think I see myself trusting in Providence! No, sir. Since I was knee-high to a duck, I've put my trust in something that has never deceived me yet, and never will while one timber of this queer craft of a world hangs together; and I'd advise you, my little Spanish friend, to do the same."

"Indeed! perhaps I may. What is this wonderful sheet-anchor called?"

"Captain Nick Tempest, sir," said that individual, drawing himself up, and fixing his flashing eyes on his companion's face. "I've trusted in him, sir and I'll back him against luck and Providence, and all the other sheet-anchors in the world. Luck! ugh!" said the captain, with a look of disgust, as he let fly a last volley of tobacco-juice.

The boy would have smiled, but there was a warning gleam in the fierce eyes of the captain that forbade it; so he said nothing, and again they walked on for a short distance in silence, and sulkiness on the part of the gallant commander of the Fly-by-Night.

"Is that the inn we are to stop at?" at length inquired the boy, Jacinto.

"Yes," said the captain with a sullen growl, "that's the inn I'm to stop at. I don't know anything about yours; and what's more, I don't care. You may go where you please."

Again that slight and seemingly irrepressible smile flickered for a moment round the lad's handsome mouth; but it was gone directly, and he was standing with his hand in the captain's arm, and his dark, bright eyes fixed on his gruff, surly face, saying, in his soft, musical accents:

"Come, Captain Tempest, forget and forgive; it is hardly worth your while to be angry with me. We have been good friends since the day we left merry England until this; and as there is no telling how soon we may part now, it will never do to quarrel at the last moment."

"Quarrel!" said Captain Nick, contemptuously. "Quarrel with a little pinch of down like you! Why, I'd as soon quarrel with a woman! Not much fear of you and I quarreling, my young shaver!"

"Well, let us be friends then, as we were before. Come, captain, shake hands on it—if I spoke impertinently that time, I am sorry for it. Will that do?"

He held out his hand—a small, fair, delicate hand, that no lady need have been ashamed of—and looked up, with a pleading face that was quite irresistible, in the gruff captain's face. Captain Nick, with a stifled growl, took the boy's hand in his own huge digit, and gave it a crushing shake.

"There! don't come it over me with your soft-sawder, Master Jacinto, if you please," he said, as if half-angry with himself for the liking he could not help feeling for the handsome boy. "You've got a sweet tongue of your own: and though it can sting pretty sharply at times, you are always ready to plaster the wound over again with some of that same honeyed-balsam. You see, you can't take me in, my lad. You'll have to cut a few more of your eye-teeth before you can manage that. Here we are at the Mermaid, and there she swings herself, the same picture of ugliness she has always been since I first had the pleasure of her acquaintance. Wonder if old Rowlie has thought proper to die of apoplexy yet!"

As he spoke, he passed through the low doorway, and entered the house, closely followed by Jacinto. The door opened straight into the bar-room—a low, dirty, smoke-begrimed place, with a strong odor of ardent spirits and



sawdust pervading it. Numerous casks were ranged round the walls; and on the shelves behind the counter were arrayed bottles, decanters and glasses, and all the other paraphernalia common in such places. Leaning over the counter, with his back to the door and busily engaged in turning over the greasy leaves of a dirty little account-book, was a fat, round-about little man, with a rosy face, indicative of an unlimited amount of solemn good-nature.

"I say, old Bob Rowlie! what cheer, my hearty?" called Captain Nick, giving the little man a slap in the back that nearly knocked him into a jelly. "Alive and kicking yet, I see! What a precious long time the old boy is of claiming his own, to be sure!"

"Captain Nick Tempest," said the little man, slowly, as he laid down his pencil and book, and looked solemnly in the face of his boisterous guest, "and so you've come back again, have you? I might have known it was you, for nobody ever knocks the breath out of my body till you come. Who is this?" said Mr. Rowlie, looking with his slow, grave gaze toward the young Spaniard, who was leaning carelessly against the door-post.

"Oh, a customer I've brought you—a young chap from beyond the seas," said the captain, flinging himself into a chair; "come in, Jacinto, and make yourself at home. How's the old woman, Bob?"

"Mrs. Rowlie is per-fec'-ly well," slowly articulated Mr. Rowlie, taking a prolonged look at Jacinto, "per-fec'-ly well, thanky. Is the men coming up to-night?"

"Not to-night. I'm going to swing my hammock here myself to-night. How's trade these times, old buffer? Many customers at the Mermaid?"

"Ye-es," said Mr. Rowlie, deliberately, "ye-es, sometimes there is; and then, again, sometimes there ain't. Vessels principally bring customers, but they don't stay long, mostly the reverse. Generally, it's quiet here. Uncommon so."

"Well, it's likely to be brisk enough while I stay; my men are the very dickens for spending their money. And now, my fat friend, just let me have something to eat—will you? I feel hungry enough to eat yourself, bones

and all, if you were properly stuffed and roasted. Come, hurry up ! ”

By way of complying with this request, Mr. Rowlie waddled leisurely to a door at the other end of the room, and opening it, he called, in a husky falsetto : “ Mrs. Rowlie-e-e ! ”

“ What do you want ? ” called a brisk voice from within, as a merry-looking little woman, like her husband, somewhat of the dumpling order, came to the door, and peeped out.

“ Captain Nick Tempest has arrived, and wants some food.”

“ Oh, marcy sake ! Captain, how d’ye do ? ” said Mrs. Rowlie, bustling out, and holding out her hand to the burly captain. “ How unexpected people keep a-turning up ! I’m raily glad to see you. I raily am, now.”

“ Thankee, Mrs. Rowlie—thankee ! ” said the captain, as he sprung up, and gave the buxom dame a rousing salute on the cheek, while Mr Rowlie looked on in solemn dismay, “ and how do you find yourself, old lady ? Blooming like a hollyhock, as usual ? ”

“ Lor’ captain, behave yourself, can’t ye ? ” said Mrs. Rowlie, jerking herself away, and wiping the offended cheek with her check apron : “ please goodness, you’ve no more manners nor a pig. Hey ! who’s this ? Lor’ bless me ! where did this uncommon handsome young gentleman come from ? ” she exclaimed, suddenly, catching sight of Jacinto, who was still leaning carelessly against the door.

The boy doffed his cap and bowed with a smile to the old lady, who gazed at him with unconcealed admiration.

“ From Spain, Dame Quickly, if you ever heard of such a place,” said the captain. “ But never mind his beauty now, while there is more important matters to attend to. Do you know I’ve had nothing to eat since early noon, and now it’s almost night ? Come, be spry ! I hear something fizzling in there, and, if my nasal organ does not deceive me, something good, too. What is it.”

“ Stewed rabbit,” said the old lady, whisking the dust off a chair with her apron, and bringing it over to Jacinto. “ Do sit down, sir, and make yourself comfortable. Yes,

Captain Nick, yes ; everything will be ready directly. Lor' bless me ! how excessive handsome that young gent is, to be sure ! " said Mrs. Rowlie, *sotto voce*, as she hurried into the inner room.

" Yes, that's womankind, all over," said Captain Tempest, bitterly. " Let them see a handsome face, and old loves and old friendships are alike forgotten. Curse them all ! every mother's daughter of them, I say ! Old and young, rich and poor, they are all alike. Even this old fool, now, the moment she sees the handsome face of this young Spaniard, she is ready to forget and neglect me—me who has done more for her than he ever will or can do in his life. And these are the things that men love—that men every day stoop to love, and make fools of themselves for. Talk of cherishing vipers—there never was born a woman yet who would not be a viper if she had it in her power ! "

It was evidently some inward feeling, in which good little Mrs. Rowlie had no share, that sent Captain Nick Tempest so excitedly from his seat, and caused him to pace with such an angry, ringing tread up and down the little room, his face full of such furious, repressed passion. Mr. Rowlie gazed at him, for a moment, in stolid surprise, and then busied himself in filling a black, stumpy pipe with tobacco ; and Jacinto, sitting toying with a little, gray kitten, cast furtive glances at him from under his long eyelashes.

" Smoke ? " said Mr. Rowlie, sententiously, holding out the black, stumpy pipe to Jacinto.

" No, thank you ; I never do," said the boy, with a half-laugh, as he declined the civility.

Mr. Rowlie said nothing, but immediately clapped it in his own mouth, and was soon puffing away until he could be just faintly observed, looming up dimly through a cloud of smoke.

" Come, captain," called the voice of Mrs. Rowlie, at this juncture ; " come, young gentleman—I don't know your name," she said, to him, apologetically, as he followed the captain into the inner room, " or I'd call you it, I'm sure."

" I wouldn't advise you to try it, if you have any re-



gard for your teeth," said Captain Nick. "Call him Mr. Jacinto, if you like. I forget his second name, now; but it's a stunner, and would knock you over stiff as a mackerel if you attempted to say it. Draw in, my young hearty. One word's as good as ten—cut away. Amen. There's a grace! Now fall to."

And, following precept by example, Captain Tempest immediately "fell to," with an appetite six hours old, and sharpened by the sea-breeze to a terrifying extent. Jacinto partook lightly of Mrs. Rowlie's dainties, and looked on between laughter and dismay, as she heaped up his plate for him.

"I say, old woman," said Captain Nick, when business in the supper department began to slacken a little, "when did you see that old witch of Hades—Grizzle Howlet?"

"Let me see," said Mrs. Rowlie, leaning meditatively on her broom. "She hain't been here, I don't believe, since the night you left. No, she ain't—not since then."

"Humph!" said the captain, thoughtfully as he resumed his knife and fork, but in a far different manner than before.

At this moment a sudden bustle in the bar arrested their attention; a sharp, harsh voice was heard, addressing some question to Mr. Rowlie—evidently the voice of a woman. Mrs. Rowlie looked at the captain and uttered an ejaculation, and that worthy mariner dropped his knife and fork, pushed back his chair, and half arose.

"Marcy sakes!" exclaimed the little woman. "Did you ever? Why, I do declare! if that ain't her own blessed self!"

"Her own blessed self!" said the captain, in an undertone, and with a grim smile. "Her own *cursed* self, you mean—the old hag! How did she know I was here? I believe there's something of the vulture in that old bel-dame, and that she scents her prey afar off. By the pricking of my thumbs, some one wicked this way comes! Is *here!*" he cried as the door opened, and the object of his eulogium stood bolt upright before them.

Jacinto turned, in some curiosity to look at the newcomer, and saw what looked like an old woman, but

ought to have been a man, if judged by size. Extremely tall, she towered up in the apartment as straight as a cedar of Lebanon, and fully a head over Captain Nick Tempest. She was dressed in gray—all gray, from head to foot. A coarse gray dress, a gray woolen cloak, with a gray hood tied under her chin, and might have passed for a capuchin friar, or a “Monk of the Order Gray,” only no holy monk, or friar, ever wore such a hard, bitter, evil, unpi-  
ing face, such a stern, remorseless mouth, and such a stony, dead, unfeeling eye, as that woman wore. Upright in the door she stood, and scanned Captain Tempest, with folded arms, for full five minutes.

“Well, Grizzle, my old friend,” said that gentleman, with a sneer, “you’ll know me the next time, won’t you? Can’t I prevail on you to come in, and sit down, and make yourself as miserable as possible while you stay. How have you been since I saw you last, my dear? You can’t think how I’ve been pining for you ever since, my love.”

The woman took not the slightest notice of his jibing tone; not a muscle of her iron face moved, as she loomed up like a figure in granite, and looked down upon the contemptuous face of the captain of the Fly-by-Night.

“Oh! so my politeness is all thrown away upon you, is it?” he said, after a pause, “and you won’t speak. Very well, my darling; just as you like, you know, and I’ll let you. Mrs. Rowlie, will you have the goodness to step out to the bar and bring me a pipe? Draw up to the fire, Jacinto; it’s cold comfort this raw evening, and the entrance of that tall blast of north wind yonder has given me the chills. My dearest Grizzle, *do* come to the fire—there’s a duck. You’re cold—don’t say no—I’m sure you are!” And stretching out his arm, stage-fashion, and looking toward her, Captain Tempest began declaring, distractedly:

“ ‘Content thyself, my dearest love,  
Thy rest at home shall be  
In Rowlie’s sweet and pleasant inn,  
For travel fits not thee?

There’s the old ballad for you, altered and improved;

and here's our charming hostess with the pipe. Jacinto, my hearty, won't you have a draw?"

Jacinto, who was completely puzzled by the captain's eccentric manner, declined; and glancing toward the tall woman, was slightly disconcerted to find her needle-like eyes fixed on his face with a gaze of piercing scrutiny.

"Who is this boy you have with you, Nick Tempest?" she exclaimed, in a harsh, discordant voice as she came up, and bending down, seemed piercing the boy through and through with her gleaming eyes.

"Oh! so you have found your tongue, my sweet pet?" said Captain Tempest. "I was afraid you had lost it altogether, which would be an unspeakable pity, you know; for, as the Irish song says, 'you've got an illigant tongue, and easily set a-going.' As to who he is, his name is Jacinto Mandetti, or something about the size of that, and he comes from old Seville—place where they raise sweet oranges; and he is a good-looking youth, as you perceive, though somewhat of the tawniest. And so, no more at present."

Even through his brown skin, the flush that covered the boy's face, under her pitiless gaze, could be seen, as, with a sudden, sharp flash of his black eyes, he rose indignantly, and turned away.

"Well, I'm glad you've got through looking at him and admiring his beauty, my dear," continued the captain, in the same mocking strain. "I was beginning to feel a little jealous, you know, seeing the hearts of young and tender females are so easily captivated. Come, sit down here beside me, and tell me how the world has been using you for the last ten months."

"What devil's deed brings you back now, Captain Tempest?" said the woman, spurning the seat he placed for her away with her foot, and leaning against the mantel.

"Really, my dear Grizzle, your manner of address can hardly be called strictly polite; but plainness was always a failing of yours." And he glanced slightly at her forbidding countenance. "I came here to see my friends generally, and to see Mrs. Grizzle Howlet particularly—though that lady's welcome has been indifferent, not to

say cool. What malicious fiend, my dearest, has been poisoning your ears against me during my absence?"

"Pshaw, man! don't be a fool!" said the woman, impatiently. "Do you know why I have come here to-night?"

"How should I know?" replied the captain.

"Then it was to warn *you*, Captain Tempest; for there is danger at hand. Forewarned is forearmed, they say; so, beware!"

"Don't plagiarize, my dear woman. That tragical 'beware!' I have heard once or twice before, if my memory serves me right, when you and I used to tread the boards of Old Drury every night, and do the heavy tragedy. Do you remember those happy days, my charmer, when you were Lady Macbeth and I was the murdered Duncan?"

"Take care the old tragedy is not renewed in real life!" said the woman, with a sharp flash of her eyes. "I can act Lady Macbeth as well to-day as I could then; and," she added, bringing down her clenched hand fiercely on the mantel, "I feel quite as ready to do it!"

"No doubt of it, my love; no doubt of it. But about this danger with which I am threatened, and which your tender solicitude for my sake has made you take this long and lonesome journey to avert—a journey so full of danger, in these troublous times, to a young and lovely female like yourself. Now don't get into a passion, my dear. Where's the use?" What wicked person or persons has designs on Captain Nick Tempest now?"

With her gloomy eyes fixed on the blazing fire, and her heavy brows knotted together, the woman stood silent for a while, as if she had not heard the question. Captain Nick Tempest looked at her with a queer smile, and then went on smoking, casting a sidelong glance, as he did so, toward Jacinto. The young Spaniard stood with his back to them, gazing out into the deepening gloom of the raw, chilly evening; but the captain felt sure that not one word of the conversation was lost on him.

"Nick Tempest," said the woman, looking up at length, "do you remember the predictions of that old woman in Worcestershire, who was hunted to death for a witch



that night that you entered the vaults of Saint Faith's church and stole the diamond-ring off the finger of—"

"Hush!" exclaimed the captain, fiercely, and half-springing from his seat, as he cast a quick, apprehensive glance toward the boy.

But still the lad stood motionless as a figure in marble; and, as if reassured, he sunk back and said, in his former tone of careless mockery:

"To be sure I remember it, dear Grizzle. I have had an excellent memory through life, and it is not likely I would forget that night; more especially as you, my charmer, accompanied me in the expedition. Let's see, didn't the prophecy run something like this:

"When thou 'rt two score and ten,  
Thy fortune turns then.  
There is some one that night thou wilt see,  
The deadliest foe  
That thou ever wilt know—  
For a life will be lost betwixt ye?"

"Yes," said the woman; "and what night is this?"

"This? Why, this is the tenth of April—my birthday, as I'm a sinner! Captain Nicholas Lazarus Tempest is fifty years old—just two-score and ten—this minute, as I'm a sinner. Whew! then this is the very night!"

As he spoke, the sharp clatter of horses' hoofs rung on the stony street without, and a high, clear voice was heard calling:

"Hallo! within there!"

"And here is the man himself!" cried the woman, starting up, her eyes filling with a dusky fire. "Captain Tempest, you have been warned. Look to yourself."

"I intend to do so, my dear," said the captain, with a sneer, as he, too, arose. "What a loss you are to the stage! Kemble could not have spoken that sentence more tragically. What, are you going?"

Wrapping the coarse cloak closer about her, and drawing her gray hood down over her face till nothing was visible but a pair of fiery eyes, the woman waved her arm with a gesture, half-warning, half-menacing, as she cast a last look at the captain.

That gallant mariner responded by a bow as profound as that of an old lady in a minuet, and kissed his hand to her as she disappeared.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish, eh, Jacinto?" he said, when she was gone, with a quick, sharp glance toward the boy. "Ugly as original sin, and with the devil's own temper. Ha! the Mysterious Unknown is calling again! As I am likely to have an interest in the gentleman, I think I will just step out and see him. What do you say to coming with me, my lad?"

Nearly a minute passed before the boy either answered or turned round; and when he did so at last, Captain Tempest saw a face from which every trace of color had fled—white even to the very lips; and with a look so strange and inexplicable in the depths of the dark, lustrous eyes, that it fairly staggered that worthy mariner.

"Hallo! what's the matter with you, my boy?" he exclaimed, in amazement.

"Nothing!" said the boy; but even his voice was changed so that the captain hardly knew it.

Captain Tempest gave him a piercing look, but he could not fathom the sudden emotion that had blanched the cheek and changed the voice of the Spanish boy; and at length he turned away, with a long, wailing whistle that told how completely he was baffled, and, followed by Jacinto, passed out of the room to behold his unknown foe.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE LONE HOUSE.

"Away then hied the heir of Linne,  
O'er hill, and holt, and moor, and fen,  
Until he came to a lonesome lodge  
That stood so low in lonely glen."

—PERCY RELIQUES.

BOTH Mr. and Mrs. Rowlie had deserted the bar-room, and stood in the doorway talking to the stranger, who was on horseback, and could be clearly discovered in the last rays of the fading daylight.

Captain Tempest drew back a little behind the ample

person of the worthy host of the Mermaid, and scrutinized the new-comer with more interest than one usually examines complete strangers. And very well worth looking at the stranger was, as he sat on his superb horse like a prince of the blood: and the captain could not help inwardly acknowledging that seldom had his eyes fallen on a more gallant figure. He was a young man, of not more than four or five-and-twenty, tall and finely formed, with a certain bold, dashing look that well became him, and a sort of indefinable grace about him at once careless and high-bred. His dark curling hair, his clear, bold blue eyes, his handsome mouth shadowed by a thick, dark mustache, with his handsome figure, made up what all must have admitted to be a remarkably handsome young gentleman—for a gentleman he evidently was. His dress was travel-stained, his heavy top-boots splashed with mud, and his horse looked as if he had been ridden long and hard.

Holding the reins in one hand, the young man was pointing with his whip toward the north.

"So that's the way to Fontelle, is it?" he was saying, half-musingly. "I thought it lay in the opposite direction. Can I reach it to-night do you think?" he said turning to Mr. Rowlie.

"Well, yes, sir; you might, and then again you mightn't," responded that worthy, scratching his bald pate in perplexity.

"How many miles is it from here?" asked the stranger, adjusting his horse's girths.

"Well, sometimes it's more, and then again sometimes it's less," replied Mr. Rowlie, sententiously.

The handsome stranger looked up and favored mine host with a stare of so much surprise at this announcement, that Mrs. Rowlie felt called upon to strike in.

"He means, if you please, sir," said that little woman, dropping a smiling little courtesy, "that it's according to the way you go. If you take the turnpike, it's nigh onto forty mile; but if you go over the mountain, it's ten miles less, sir, if you please."

"Oh," said the stranger, enlightened, and touching his hat gallantly to the old lady in acknowledgment, "I see;

but as I am a complete stranger here, I do not know the way over the mountains; and it would be rather inconvenient, not to say unpleasant, to break my neck just at present. So, on the whole, I'll take the road for it; my horse will do it in five hours, I think. Is it going to rain before midnight, think you?" said the stranger, glancing at Mr. Rowlie.

"Well, now, there ain't never no saying about the weather hereabouts, 'cause it generally does what it ain't expected to do. It might rain, you know, and then again it mightn't," said Mr. Rowlie, evidently determined not to commit himself.

The stranger laughed.

"Oh! thank you; quite enlightened. What an acquisition you would be to an almanac-maker, my good friend. Well, I think I will try your road for it—and an infernal road it is; my horse is lamed already. Good-by, my friend; good-by, madam," said the young man, gathering up the reins, preparatory to starting.

All this time Captain Nick had been watching him, and listening intently; and now muttering, "Not so fast, my fine fellow. I'll find out what you're made of first," he came out, and stood directly in his way.

"Beg pardon, sir—going to Fontelle, eh?"

"Yes, sir; have you any objection?" said the young man, soothing his horse, startled by the captain's sudden appearance.

"Not in the least, my young friend. May I ask your business there?"

The young man raised his handsome eyes, and fixed them full on the captain for a moment, and said, quietly:

"Yes—you may ask; but whether I'll answer or not, is another question."

"You'd like a guide over the mountains, wouldn't you?" continued the unabashed captain. "What would you think of me, now?"

"Well," said the young man, carelessly, after mature deliberation on the subject, "I should say, if I wanted an impertinent scoundrel for a guide, I should take you. Your face is anything but a letter of recommendation, my good friend."



"Then, by Heaven!" said the captain, his face growing crimson with rage, "my deeds shall not belie my face! Out of this you shall not stir until you have answered for that epithet!"

"My dear sir, you really must excuse me," said the young man, in his careless way; "I never quarrel, save with gentlemen."

With a fierce oath, Captain Tempest grasped the bridle-rein so violently that the horse almost fell back on his haunches.

"You violent young puppy! do you know who you are talking to?" he cried, in a voice hoarse with passion.

"Some rascally, low-bred Yankee, I have no doubt! Come, sir, let go my bridle-rein!" said the stranger, calmly, but with a sudden rising light in his eyes that might have warned Captain Tempest of his danger.

But Captain Tempest, hearing only his calm, even tone, laughed insolently in his face, and grasped it all the tighter. As he did so, a hand was laid on his arm, and the boy Jacinto stood beside him, his momentary emotion all gone, and his face expressing only concern at the quarrel.

"Do let go, captain! Why should you quarrel with him, a perfect stranger?" said the boy, earnestly, laying hold of the captain's arm, while the young man fixed his eye on Jacinto with a startled look.

"Go to the devil," was his harsh response, as he shook off the boy's hand and tightened his hold of the bridle, never for a moment releasing hold of the reins, nor removing his insulting stare of derisive triumph from the stranger's face.

The words recalled the young man from the transient interest Jacinto had excited, and with a stern compression of his handsome mouth, and a bright, angry flash of his handsome eye, he turned to the captain.

"Will you let go my bridle-rein?" he said.

"No," said the captain with a sneer.

"Then, by Jove! I'll make you!" he cried, and quick as lightning he raised his whip, and cut the captain a blinding slash in the face.

With a shriek of a wild beast of prey, Captain Tempest,

bleeding and blinded, sprung back, and with a derisive shout, the young man struck spurs into his horse and flew down the road, shouting back as he did so :

“Good-evening, my kind friend!—better luck next time!” And, with a laugh, he was out of sight in a moment. The last glimpse he had of Captain Tempest, showing him livid and foaming at the mouth, in a perfect frenzy of impotent rage.

The young man rode on rapidly for nearly half an hour, casting a glance back every now and then, as if he expected pursuit; and when it became too dark to see, halting at intervals to listen. Nothing met his ear, however, but the faint, distant booming of the sea, and the melancholy wailing of the wind, that was rising each moment, and his sharp pace gradually relaxed; and loosening the reins on his horse’s neck, he suffered him to go at a more moderate pace.

Night had fallen at last—fallen in more than Egyptian darkness—with a “gloomy sky above, a gloomy earth below.” The wind came wailing up from the sea, and over the distant hills, in long, lamentable blasts, and a drizzling, uncomfortable rain, that pierced the skin, began to fall with it. The blast was raw, and cold, too; and, with a shiver, the young man lifted a folded cloak of black cloth, lined with rich fur, that lay over the saddle, and flung it around his shoulders. In vain he strove to pierce through the Tartarian darkness—the eyes of Argus himself would have failed in such a night; so, pulling his hat down over his face, to shade it from the blinding rain, he allowed his wearied steed to jog on after his own will.

“If I had thought the storm would have arisen so soon, I would have stayed at that inn all night,” he said in a sort of soliloquy; “but it’s too late now, and I must make the best of a bad bargain. On, Saladin, my boy, on! There is rest and comfort in store for you, once we reach Fontelle. I wonder if there is no house along the way where I could stay for the night; or have I lost my way among the wilds of Jersey? What a Don Quixote I am, to be sure!” he said with a slight laugh, “to leave merrie England and ride over to America in search of ad-

ventures, and begin by horse-whipping one of the natives. What a remarkably handsome boy that was, and how his voice did remind me of—ha! if that's not a light by all that's lucky! Turn, Saladin! there's shelter at hand!"

Far in the distance, dimly twinkling through the deep gloom, the traveler had caught a faint, uncertain ray of light, and never did storm-tossed mariner hail the welcome beacon more gladly than did he. Saladin saw it too; and pricking up his ears he mended his dejected pace and struck off from the high-road in the direction whence it came.

Nearly an hour had elapsed since his leaving the Mermaid, and the young man judged he had come about six miles during that time. The light appeared, as he went, to have been further off than at first he had supposed; and the house, if house it were, to be situated in a sort of marsh, or bog, into which his horse sunk at every step. Still, Saladin plowed his way bravely on, sinking and rising again, until the light was reached at last, and the traveler saw it issued from an upper window of a solitary house—in very truth, a "lonesome lodge that stood so low in lonely glen."

"Now, the saints alone know what sort of savages live here," said the young man, as he alighted, and raising the handle of his heavy riding-whip, knocked loudly and authoritatively at the door; "but be they goblins, kelpies, or earthly sinners, I'll try them, sooner than pass such a night as this is going to be, under the cold canopy of a New Jersey sky." And again he knocked as if he would have beaten down the stout, oaken door.

A moment after, and the sound of bolts withdrawing met his ear: and the next, it swung partially back, but as he attempted to enter he was held back by a chain which prevented the door opening sufficiently for that purpose. Not a ray of light could he see, but only a white face that shone through the deep darkness.

"Who are you?" said a harsh, unpleasant voice, that might have belonged either to a man or a woman.

"A traveler caught in the storm, who seeing the light, has sought shelter here," he answered promptly.

"Are you alone?"

"Yes; unless you call my horse company. Come, my friend, be hospitable enough to let me in. I am able to pay you, as it happens, for a night's lodging."

"Enter," said the invisible voice, withdrawing the chain. "One has to be careful who they admit these times; for since the war there have been marauding parties of soldiers knocking about the country, and it makes it dangerous for a poor, lone woman to admit every one. Walk in, sir; I'll see to your horse."

"Thank you; I always make a point of doing that myself. I'll accompany you if you'll allow me."

"As you like. Here, Orrie! Orrie!" called the woman, suddenly throwing open a door and admitting such a flood of light from a huge, blazing fire, that for a moment the stranger's eyes, accustomed so long to the darkness, were half-blinded.

"What?" said a childish voice, so close to his elbow that he started; and looking down he saw a little boy, apparently about twelve years of age—the most elfish mite of childhood he had ever beheld—with a small, thin, dark face, precocious beyond its years, and lit up by a pair of the most wonderful black eyes that ever were seen. Its dress was an odd affair—a short red flannel skirt under a boy's jacket, and a boy's cap crushed down over a tangled mass of short, thick curls from beneath which gleamed its odd, wild, cunning little elfish face.

"Take the lantern and show the gentleman the way to the stable," said the woman—a remarkably tall, hard-featured specimen of femaledom—as she passed into the room and left him.

The child darted away, and presently reappeared with a dark-lantern; and springing out into the rain, seized the horse by the bridle, as if it were quite a matter of course, and led him off, followed by his master, who laughed to himself at the odd figure the child cut.

"What a spicy tiger that same little atom of mankind would make! and what a rig he has on, to be sure! He would be worth a million in cash to ride the favorite at the Derby."

The child led the animal into the stable occupied by another horse, and tied him up, and began unloosening



his trappings in a twinkling. The young man assisted him, and when Saladin had been properly rubbed down and cared for, they both left the stable together, and turned toward the house.

"You're quite used to this sort of thing, I see, my lad," he said, glancing in mingled curiosity and amusement at the boy.

"Tying the horses?—should think I was," said the child, with something of a chuckle.

"Is this a regular tavern, sonny?"

"No, though folks stay in sometimes," was the reply.

"Who lives here? What's your name, my boy?"

"I ain't your boy! I ain't a boy at all! I'm a girl! and my name's Oriole; but for short they call me Orrie," said the little one, sharply.

"Whew!" whistled the young man; "here's a discovery. I beg ten thousand pardons; but your dress led me into error. What makes you wear boy's clothes?"

"Oh! she makes me wear whatever's handiest!"

"Who is 'she,' Miss Oriole?"

"Why, she, you know—her that let you in."

"Oh! that tall, old woman! Is she your mother?"

"My mother?" said the child, with a shrill, elfish laugh; "no I ain't got none—never had any. She's only old Grizzle!"

They had reached the door by this time, and the little one darted in, in her quick way, held it open for the stranger, and then closed and bolted it again, in a flash.

"Come along right in here," said Oriole, whose fleet motion reminded him of her namesake, as she held open the door of what seemed to be the kitchen; up the ample chimney of which roared and crackled a huge fire—a welcome sight to our cold and weary traveler.

"Set a chair for the gentleman, Orrie. Sit up to the fire, sir, and warm yourself," said the woman, as she whipped a large pot off the fire, from which issued a savory odor of boiled pork.

The young man looked at her, and thought that in all his life he had never seen or heard a more villainous and repulsive-looking specimen of the angelic sex. It seemed to him that she imparted a sinister character even to

the peaceful and domestic occupation of preparing supper.

"Woman, lovely woman!" thought the young man, with a half-laugh, as he looked at her grisly face, almost hideous in its ugliness, now that the hood of her cloak, which she still wore, was thrown back. "What a mouth for kissing! I wonder if by any possibility anybody could ever have loved that woman, for in her best days she must have been worse than ugly—wicked! Wonder what this queer little kelpie in the bare feet is to her. Old Grizzle! a most appropriate name. A 'poor lone woman,' indeed! It's little she need fear intruders, guarded by the three-headed dragon of Age, Ugliness and Poverty."

The young man arose, and turning his back to the fire, brought his coat-tails forward over his arms, and with his legs in the form of a triangle, subsided into that state of tranquil happiness all true-born Englishmen feel in the above position, and sunk into a day-dream, from which a call to supper awoke him.

The hungry traveler obeyed with alacrity, pulling out his watch, an elegant gold one, set with brilliants, to see the hour. As he replaced it, he started slightly to see the fierce, gleaming eyes of the woman fixed upon it with a greedy, devouring gaze, that was instantly removed the moment their eyes met.

That look was a revelation. Replacing the watch, he sat down in silence to supper, inwardly wondering whether he would not have been quite as safe out in the storm as here, and whether, as the old adage has it, "he had not halloed before he was out of the woods." During the meal, he was assiduously waited upon by the old woman, who made various efforts to draw from him his name and business, which he completely baffled by his evasive answers.

"Your room is all ready, sir, and you can go to it whenever you like," said the woman, as he arose from the table.

"Very well, I will go now. But first," he said, carelessly, "I will look to my pistols lest the priming may have got wet with the rain."

He drew out from the breast-pocket of his great-coat,

as he spoke, a pair of handsomely-mounted pistols, and examined them carefully. As he suddenly looked up from his occupation, he caught his hostess looking at him with something like a sneer on her repulsive face.

"It is not safe to travel unarmed these times," he said, looking her full in the face, as he replaced them. "A well-primed pistol is about the best thing a man can have just at present."

"Quite right, sir," said the woman, lighting a candle. "This way, if you please."

He turned and followed her up a flight of stairs, and into a large, dark, low-ceilinged room, where a fire was dimly burning. In one corner stood a bed, and in another a table and this, with a couple of chairs, comprised the sole furniture of the room. Setting the candle on the table, the woman bade him good-night, and left the room.

But, somehow, tired as he was, the young stranger could not make up his mind to go to bed.

There seemed something evil and sinister about the woman, and the place altogether, that banished all desire for sleep. This lonely house, far removed from every other habitation, was just the place for deeds of blood and darkness. All the old tales he had ever heard or read of travelers robbed and murdered in lonesome old houses, and never heard of more, came crowding through his mind, until he had worked himself into a waking nightmare. Placing his pistols on the table, he raised the blind and tried to look out, but it was as dark as Erebus, and a perfect tempest of wind and rain was raging. Preferring to risk the uncertain danger of robbery and murder, rather than the more certain one of a complete drenching, he flung himself into a chair before the fire and fell into deep thought. An hour passed and then another, and all was perfectly still. The fire began to burn low on the hearth, and the candle flared and glittered on the table. Rising with a yawn, the young man was about to throw himself, dressed and all, on the bed, when a sight caught his eye that startled him almost as much as the ghost of Banquo did King Macbeth. At the head of the bed, on the whitewashed wall, was the dark, clotted mark of five fingers, as if a bloody hand had been suddenly dashed

against it. There it was—glittering red, and ghastly, and horrible, in the dying light of the fire—that bleeding hand on the wall. It seemed so like the realization of his fears, so like a ghost risen from the dead to warn him, that he recoiled in horror from the grisly sight, and gazed on it with pretty much the same feelings as Robinson Crusoe gazed on the solitary footprint in the sand.

All thought of going to bed was now out of the question, and, approaching his door, he opened it softly and listened. The door at the foot of the stairs, opening into the kitchen, was ajar, and through it, plainly audible to his ears, came the subdued hum of several voices—men's voices, too.

The young traveler had stood face to face with death and danger many a time before now, and had plenty of physical courage; and now, as he saw his full danger, his nerves seemed changed to steel, and his handsome face grew set and stern.

Softly removing his heavy boots, he stole noiselessly down the stairs, and through the crevice in the door he could plainly see and hear all that passed in the room—himself unobserved. Three men—one stout, middle-aged and short; the other two young, and of almost gigantic stature, either of whom might have taken a premium for villainous countenances—sat around the fire, talking in low, earnest voices. The woman Grizzle, the most villainous-looking of the lot, sat beside the elder, and it was her voice he first heard.

"I tell you it's worth fifty pounds, if it's worth a far-thing!" she was saying. "It was set with gems—real brilliants, too—none of your sham cheats; and he's a born aristocrat himself, if ever I saw one—nothing of the swell or humbug about him. Of course he has more money with him than that; and you will find him the best bird you have plucked this many a day!"

"But the pistols?" said the short stout man.

"Pooh! he's asleep before this. The light's out of his room, and, even with his pistols, what can he do in the dark—and against three? He thinks we will come in at the door, if he thinks of it at all, which is not likely, though he is wide awake, I can tell you! What does he know about the trap under the bed? I tell you, there's



no danger, and it will be five hundred pounds, if not more, in your pocket. What makes it better, he's a stranger, too—I know he is; though he was as close as an oyster, and dodged every question I asked him."

Some strange, magnetic attraction made the young man remove his eyes from the speaker's face, and he was startled to encounter a pair of great, wild, glittering black orbs fixed full upon him—riveted to his face. It was the child, Oriole, crouched up in a corner, her great black eyes bearing full upon him.

He half raised his hand as if to warn her to be silent when the voice of one of the young men caught and fixed his attention.

"Of course, there's no danger; and that fellow's as safely done for as if his throat was slit from ear to ear this minute. When are we to settle him, mother?"

"I'll go up to his door and listen first," said the woman, rising, "and try to find out whether he's asleep, or only shamming. I'll be back in a minute."

"He'll soon sleep sound enough, I'll warrant him," said the other young man, stirring up the fire, with a laugh.

At that moment the young stranger felt a hand, icy cold, grasp his wrist from behind, with a grip of iron; and, with a half-repressed ejaculation, he turned round to see who had caught him.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### AN ESCAPE.

MACBETH.—"What do ye there?"

WITCHES.—"A deed without a name."

—SHAKESPEARE.

"HUSH!" said a terrified voice, "don't make a noise—don't speak! It's only me."

It was the voice of the child, Orrie. The young man glanced in wonder to the place where he had seen her last; but it was empty now.

"Come up-stairs, quick! Oh, hurry, hurry!" exclaimed the child, in an agonized whisper, as her little

hand clenched his wrist for a moment, with almost supernatural strength, and then she flitted lightly and noiselessly as a shadow up the stairs.

There was no time to lose. The woman, who had stood listening while they spoke, now started to cross the room, and the stranger, taking two or three steps at a time, sprung lightly up the stairs and entered his chamber.

Little Oriole was there before him; and the moment he entered, she shot back the bolt and secured the door.

"Hush! Listen!" said the child, in the same startled whisper. "Make a noise when she comes, so she won't think you are asleep. If she hears you awake, she won't come in just yet."

The creaking sound stairs invariably persist in making when one treads them on tiptoe, warned them that the lady of the house was at hand, and the young man, acting on the child's hint, began to whistle, pausing now and then, and moving through the room as though he were preparing for bed. Oriole stood with her ear glued to the key-hole, listening with all her might, holding up one little finger warningly, and now and then giving him an approving nod. At last she raised her head, and drew a long breath.

"She's gone," she said, coming over and looking earnestly up in his face; "but she'll come back, and so will they—old Till, and Kit, and Blaize."

"My dear little girl, how in the world came you on the stairs that time?" said the young man, who at first had been inclined to distrust her; but the terror and earnestness of her face was too real to be assumed.

"I saw you, and came round the back way—there's another pair of stairs at the end of the house, that we come up sometimes, and I had to come round, or old Grizzle would have seen me. But, oh! what will you do?" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "They'll all come up by and by, and take all your money, and then—" she paused with a violent shudder.

"Well, and then?" said the young man, looking at the child with more curiosity than anything else.

"They'll put you down the cellar!" said Oriole, in an

awe-stricken whisper, her large eyes dilating with horror.

"Will they?" said the stranger. "I'm not so sure about that. But, good heavens! what an infernal den this must be! Do they often put people down the cellar, as you call it—which, being translated, means murdering them, I suppose?"

"Oh no—not often. I only saw them put one down; and old Grizzle said—" and the child clung to him as she spoke, and her great black eyes grew wild and horror-stricken again—"that if I ever told she would put me down with him. Oh! don't you tell her! Oh! *don't* tell her!" she cried, clasping her little hands in an agony of entreaty.

"Tell her, my dear little savior?" said the young man, sitting down on a chair, and lifting her up on his knee. "Not I, indeed! What makes you live in such an accursed place?"

Oriole lifted up her black eyes, and looked at him in the greatest astonishment at such a question.

"Why, because I've got to," she said decidedly.

"What relation is this old hag of Hades to you, my child?"

"She ain't nothin' to me, as I knows of. I ain't nothin' to nobody, I guess."

"Then how came you to live here with her?"

"Lor'! how should I know?" said the child, with an impatient jerk of her shoulders. "Where's the good of your asking about that, when you know well enough they're coming up to kill you, by and by?"

"That's true enough, by Jove!" said the young man, starting up. "We must take measures to baffle their kind intentions, my precocious little friend. I heard them mention a trap-door under the bed when I was listening on the stairs, and here goes to look for it."

He attempted to move the bed as he spoke, but it resisted all his efforts.

"You can't move it," said Oriole, "and there ain't no use a-trying. Don't you see it's nailed down?"

"Well, but what about the trap? I must see after that, my little sprite." And he lifted the valance of the bed, and stooped down to examine the floor.

"Ugh!" said Orrie, with a shudder; "that's the way they go down cellar, and that's the way they'll come up here. Don't you lift it up—I wouldn't go near it for the world! Oh, I forgot! You can't, anyway, 'cause it's fastened underneath."

"So, then, there's nothing to be done but to sit here and wait till they think proper to come and finish me," said the young man, rising and walking up and down the room—"a mighty pleasant prospect, upon my word! I might as well deliver my last will and testament, veritably at once, to this queer little damsel, and then devote the remainder of the time to preparing for heaven, or—the other place! I say, my little friend, I wonder they are so imprudent as to allow you to know about these blood-chilling things, or to be in the room with them while they are plotting their hellish designs!"

"Well, they wouldn't either; only the last time the man screamed out, and I heard him and came in. It was in this room, too," said the child, sinking her voice to a whisper, and casting a terrified glance around; "and he was on that bed, and old Grizzle had him by the hands; and Blaize by the feet; and they kept him down, and his face and neck were all covered with blood, and he screamed out—oh, dreadfully!—until Kit held the pillow over his face, and when he took it away, he was as still—oh, as still as anything! And then"—and Oriole's voice sunk lower and lower, and she shivered convulsively—"they put him down cellar and he's been there ever since!"

A slight shudder passed through the form of the young stranger, and a look of horror and loathing swept over his fine face.

"Heavens above! what a sight for a child? What a sight for any one in a Christian country? What did they say to you for coming, my dear child?"

"Oh! Blaize would have killed me, only she wouldn't let him; but she beat me dreadfully," said Oriole, wincing at the recollection. "And she said if ever I told any one, she would put me down cellar along with him. I never did tell any one either, till you come; and I shouldn't have told you, only they were going to put you down cellar too."



Don't you tell her, mind—you said you wouldn't, you know?"

"Neither shall I—don't fear. And so, as you know of the other murder, they didn't mind your being in the room and hearing of this?"

"No," said Oriole; "they thought I would not tell, you know, 'cause it's a good long while since then, and I never did tell nobody."

"And why is it that I am to be 'put down cellar,' as you call it, since they have let others escape?"

"Oh! 'cause you've got money—old Grizzle says so—and a nice watch and lots of things; and she wants 'em. If I was you, I'd give them to her, and tell her I wouldn't tell anybody. They won't be any good to you, you know, if you are killed."

"That's true enough," said the young man, with a momentary smile. "But supposing I neither let them kill me, nor give them the watch—eh? How would that be, Orrie? If it comes to killing, I rather fancy they will find two can play at that game."

"But there's four of them, and you can't kill four," said Orrie, with a puzzled look.

"Large odds; but I've fought against as many before now. I didn't live in a certain green island of the west, as aid-de-camp to His Grace the Lord Lieutenant for three years, without getting into a shindy now and then—thank fortune!" said the young Englishman, speaking more to himself than Orrie.

"And so you're going to kill them?" said Orrie, with simplicity.

"I shall make the attempt, my young friend; and if I fail—why there will only be a scrapegrace the less in the world. But see here, my good little girl," he said, stopping before her, and lifting the tangled hair off her small, gipsyish face, "what will they say to you, when they find you here? They will half kill you, won't they?"

"Oh yes! I forgot," said the child, starting up in terror. "I must go. I can't stay, you know. Old Grizzle, no doubt, thinks I have gone to bed; and if she were to catch me here, she—"

"Would put you down cellar," said the young man, with a smile.

"Yes," said Orrie, moving quickly toward the door.

But at that instant, a sudden noise, startling enough, arrested her steps, and sent her young blood curdling to her heart.

It was the hushed sound of footsteps below, and a sudden noise, as if some one had stumbled, followed by a fierce, suppressed oath; and then there was an instant's deathlike silence.

As if frozen where she stood, the child, Orrie, paused, her great black eyes wild and dilating, her lips springing, white and quivering, apart, her small hands involuntarily clenching until the sharp nails sunk in the quivering flesh, her very breathing suspended, until it became painful to listen for its return. Not the faintest sound escaped her: she stood as if turned to stone.

Making a hasty motion for her to be silent, the young man seized a pistol in either hand, and fixed his eyes steadily on the trap-door, his handsome face set stern and resolute, his eye bright, bold and dauntless, his pulse calm and steady.

There seemed a momentary pause below, in which nothing was to be heard but the beating and dashing of the storm without; and then there came the near sound of bolts cautiously withdrawing beneath.

The young stranger grasped his pistol tighter, and sighted it, with deadly accuracy for the trap. One moment more, and one at least of these midnight assassins would have got his due; but Fate, or Providence, or the brave young Englishman's guardian angel willed it otherwise; for, at that moment, in the very crisis of affairs, a most unlooked-for interruption occurred.

A loud and violent knock—a knock that shook the whole house from attic to cellar—resounded on the front door.

There was a quick, startled ejaculation from below, and the bolt was hurriedly shot back.

A faint, repressed cry broke from the lips of Orrie; and the young man lowered his weapon, and looked at her in wonder.

Again the knock was repeated, louder and longer than

before, until the house echoed and reverberated with the thundering noise.

The stranger bent his head and listened intently ; and, with hearing sharpened by excitement, heard the sound of retreating feet below ; and then, for an instant or two, all was perfectly still. But only for an instant ; then the belated wayfarer without, whoever it might be, evidently determined to be heard if the door held out, raised another uproarious knock, accompanied by a shout that could be even heard in that upper room :

“Hallo ! within there ! Open the door—will you ?—and don’t keep a fellow here in the storm all night !”

“Oh, it’s Frank De Vere—it’s Frank De Vere !” said Orrie, springing forward with a joyful cry. “That’s him, I know. Nobody else ever makes such a noise as he does. Oh, you’re all safe now—just as safe as can be ! They won’t touch you while Frank De Vere stays !”

“Well, it’s pleasant to know even that. But who is Frank De Vere ? Not one of the De Veres of Fontelle ?”

“Yes ; he comes from Fontelle—a beautiful place. Oh, I’m so glad !” exclaimed Orrie.

“Upon my life, I have had a night of it !” said the young man, flinging himself into a chair, and pushing back carelessly his fair, brown hair. “First horsewhipping an insolent Yankee, and encountering a real fairy prince for beauty, and then falling into the hands of the Philistines ; and first meeting a witch, and then this little kelpie ; and, when about to be assassinated in cold blood, Mr. Frank De Vere thinks proper to come along at the eleventh hour and save my life. ’Pon my honor, it’s exactly like a scene in a play, where everybody is saved in the most unexpected way, just when the knife is at their throat, by everybody else. Well, luck’s every thing—no mistake about it, as I have abundantly proved by all my narrow escapes by flood and field for the last four-and-twenty years. What, Flibbertigibbet ! off, are you ? Where away now ?”

“I’m going down to see Frank,” said Oriole. “I like him.”

“Oh, you do—do you ? What a beautiful virtue frankness is to be sure, and how nicely girls get over it, once

they are emancipated from pantalettes. I don't know but what it would be right for me to go and see Frank, too. Solitude's a very fine thing in its way; but there is such a possibility as having too much of a good thing; and this is not exactly the place where one would fancy their own thoughts for companions either, right over the grave of a murdered man. Who knows but I may discover in Frank a cousin of mine, too? It's worth going to see about at all events. So here goes!"

He rose, as he spoke, and passed from the room—Orrie having already gone.

As he descended the stairs, he heard somebody blustering in like the god of the wind; and then a cheery, boyish voice exclaiming, as its owner stamped and shook the rain off himself:

"Blow ye winds, and crack your cheeks! Poor Frank's a-cold! I say, Mother Grizzle, why didn't you let me in when I knocked first, and not keep me here in the rain till I'm a sight to see, not to hear of? What with mud and rain, I'm a picture to look at—ain't I? Talk about drowned rats! If you want to see one, just cast your eyes on me, my friends! Hallo, little black-eyes! How d'ye do? No; don't come near me! I'm a living cataract—worse than Undine's uncle, and he was a cross between a man and a river! But I forgot you don't know German; so it's not likely you ever heard of the gent. Get us something to eat, Grizzle. Haven't had a blessed mouthful since early morning, as I'm a sinner! Where's Kit, and Blaize, and Old Till these times?"

"They ain't home," said the voice of the woman, Grizzle, in surly tones, as she stiffly moved through the room. "Orrie, get out of that, and go to bed. You ought to have been there long ago."

"I'd rather sit up," said Orrie, sharply.

"Oh, let little bright-eyes stay," said the new-comer. "I like to look at her. Many customers stopped here lately, Grizzle?"

"No," said Grizzle, curtly. "Who'd stop here when they could go on?"

"Ah, that's true enough!" said the boy; "it's not the most enchanting-looking bower of repose I ever saw, and



the public generally are not likely to be captivated by it. But a storm-stayed traveler might drop in now and then—on the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread."

"How did you come to be caught in the storm at this hour of the night, Master Frank?" said the woman, rattling dishes on the table.

"Well, I am on my way home from New York; and, as I was in a hurry, I thought the storm wouldn't amount to much, and that I could ride through it, until I got to Fontelle; but I found my mistake before long, and would have stopped at the Mermaid all night, only I knew it would be impossible to awake old Bob Rowlie; so I just rode on till I came here. And here I am—what's left of me, I mean; for I got more than half-washed away by the rain!"

"What took you to New York now?" said the woman. "There, sit down, and take your supper, if you want it."

"Oh, Jack sent me of course. I'm ordered about, up there, as if I wasn't of the slightest consequence to anybody. Deuce take Jack, I say!" exclaimed Master Frank, with his mouth full.

"Amen!" said a voice, that made the woman start and the youth jump up from his chair.

And the next moment the young stranger pushed open the door at the foot of the stairs, and coolly walked in.

The keen, piercing, hawk-like eye of the woman was bent upon him for an instant; but his face expressed nothing but its usual careless *sang froid* as he met her gaze, and then glanced, with easy indifference, at Master Frank—a bright-eyed, fair-haired, fresh-faced lad of sixteen or eighteen.

"The noise at the door aroused me," he said, as if in explanation, "and not feeling like sleeping, and my fire having gone out, I thought I would come down here. I hope I have not startled you."

"Startled me!" said the youth, slowly returning to his former occupation, "you've scared me out of a year's growth—shattered my nervous system all to smash!"

"Very sorry to hear it," said the stranger, in his careless way; "but your prayer for Jack, whoever he may be,

seemed so heartfelt that, as a pious Christian—which I flatter myself I am—I could not help responding to it. I think I heard you mention Fontelle as I came down-stairs. Do you know the family there?”

“Well, I should think I did—rather!” said Frank, with emphasis; “more especially as I generally pitch my tent there myself when I’m at home.”

“What, are you a De Vere?”

“Well, I’m commonly called that, for want of a better name I suppose. But, what do you know about the De Veres?” continued Master Frank.

“Well, I believe I claim kindred with the family,” said the careless stranger. “My name is Disbrowe, the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe, more commonly known as *Captain* Disbrowe, of His Most Gracious Majesty’s Horse Guards.”

“Hey!” said Master Frank, dropping his knife and fork, and staring at the young and handsome gentleman, “it ain’t possible, is it?”

The stranger smiled, and bowed slightly.

“And you’re the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe, brother of Lord Earnecliffe!” exclaimed the boy.

“And nephew of Robert De Vere, Esq., of Fontelle? Yes, I have that honor,” said the stranger.

Up sprung Frank from his seat; and darting over, he caught the young Englishman’s hand and shook it heartily, saying, with a delighted shout:

“Hooray! if this ain’t an uncommon streak of good luck, my name’s not Frank! Good gracious! just to think of it! Why, it’s the most unexpected and knock-down *rencontre* that ever anybody heard of since they were born!” said Frank, shaking the Honorable Alfred’s hand, as if it had been a pump-handle, in his surprise and delight.

## CHAPTER IV.

FONTELLE.

“It was a sandy level wherein stood  
This old and lonesome house. Far as the eye  
Could measure, on the green back of the wood  
The smoke lay always low and lazily.

“But from the rock, rough-grained and icy-crowned,  
Some little flowers from out some cleft will rise,  
And in this quiet land my love I found,  
With all their soft light sleeping in her eyes.”

—ALICE CARY.

THE young Englishman glanced toward his slightly uncourteous hostess, to see what effect this announcement had on her; and saw her standing, looking steadily into the fire, with the strangest expression of mingled triumph, delight and exultation, added to another inexplicable look—as if a demoniacal prospect of some sort had suddenly been opened before her. Her evil face had so strange a fascination for him at that moment, that, unheeding Frank De Vere’s boisterous greeting, he kept his eyes on her, and asked:

“What picture do you see in the fire, my worthy hostess, that seems so strongly to rivet your attention?”

She looked up, and met his gaze with a dark and most sinister smile.

“One that you will see, I hope—I *believe*—some day, in real life, young sir,” she replied, transfixing him with her basilisk eyes.

“Indeed! and what may it be, pray?”

“I saw,” said the woman, pointing to the glowing coals, “a pit there, so black, so bottomless, that, if it opened visibly before you now, you would shrink and recoil from it in horror.

“Possible!” said the young man, in his careless tone. “Well, and what of it? Did you see nothing else?”

"You—you were at the bottom of it!"

"Oh, was I? And you hope that it may come true some day—do you? Of course I am mightily obliged to you; but, at the same time, I'd rather be excused."

"But you were not alone," persisted the woman, as if he had not spoken.

"Indeed? Well, it is pleasant to know even that. Who had the atrocious taste to accompany me there, my dear madam?"

"I saw," said the old woman, folding her arms, and looking full in his careless, handsome face with her sinister smile, "I saw some one falling down, and down, and down into that dark and loathsome gulf; and lie, fallen and degraded in their scornful pride, in the very slime at your feet, spurned alike by God and man, and that one was—"

"Well," said the young man, startled a little from his *nonchalant* manner by the suppressed passion that throbbed like a rising tide in her face and voice.

"*Jack De Vere!*" she said, raising her voice almost to a shriek, as, with a last malignant glance, she turned to leave the room.

"Don't mind her, Captain Disbrowe!" exclaimed Frank, indignantly; "she's crazy one-half her time, and not very sensible the rest. Nobody minds what old Grizzle Howlet says."

"Who is this Jack De Vere, on whose destiny I am to have so dismal an effect?" inquired the soldier, resuming his indifferent manner.

"Oh, a cousin of ours, of course; one of the De Veres of Fontelle."

"Is he at Fontelle now?"

Frank nodded and laughed, and the laugh was shrilly echoed by the elfish sprite, Orrie, who still crouched in the chimney corner.

"Then I shall see him to-morrow?"

"Yes; you'll see him to-morrow," said Frank, still laughing, and seeming immensely tickled by some inward feeling.

"What are you laughing at?" said Captain Disbrowe, with a puzzled look.



Frank opened his mouth to protest he never was more serious in his life, but in the effort another roar escaped him.

"Well, this is rather droll," said the young Englishman, "laughing over such a solemn matter as the extinguishing of Mr. Jack De Vere and Captain Alfred Disbrowe, when—"

"Orrie!" called the harsh voice of Mother Grizzle at this moment, "get up and go to bed."

"I don't feel sleepy, and don't want to go," said Orrie, settling herself closer into the corner.

With the ringing tread of a dragoon, the old woman marched in and approached her; but, seeing her intention, Miss Oriole thought discretion the better part of valor, and springing up, darted away, and was up the stairs in a twinkling.

"I should like to know if you two mean to go to bed to-night?" said the woman, snappishly. "I can't sit up here till morning, waiting till you get done talking."

"Well, go to bed, then!" said Frank. "Nobody asked you to sit up."

Merely regarding Frank with a contemptuous glance, the woman turned, sternly, to Captain Disbrowe:

"Are you going to your room, sir, or are you going to stay here?"

"That's a question I can't take it upon myself to answer on so short a notice, madam," said the young man, running his fingers through his glossy dark locks; "but don't put yourself out on my account, I beg. Allow me to insinuate that you had better retire to rest yourself, as it is considerably late, and time all honest folks were in bed."

"Oh, well, she needn't hurry for that, as it don't apply to her case in the least," said Frank, flippantly.

A darker scowl even than usual settled on the lowering brow of old Grizzle; but, without a word, she walked silently and sulkily from the room.

"She's a pleasant hostess, she is," remarked Frank, looking after her, "and the sort of a woman a man would like to marry, I don't think. I hope you won't judge all our American ladies by the two specimens you have just seen."

We have some tolerable good-looking females among them, as I will show you when we reach Fontelle."

"That child, Orrie, might grow up a handsome girl yet," said Captain Disbrowe.

"She *might*. The moon might be made of green cheese, for all we know."

"She has handsome eyes."

"Yes ; so has a toad."

"Come, now, my cynical young friend," said the young Englishman, laughing, "if she were properly cared for, she might grow up a fine-looking girl."

"If—if !" said Frank, contemptuously. "If the sky falls we may catch larks. She'll have to be born again before you can make anything of that little tawny kelpie, but a weird, witch-like, old-fashioned little goblin. I believe in my soul there is something uncanny about that same little hornet ; and I never see her black eyes shining on me in the dark, without feeling inclined to take to my heels and run as if Old Nick was after me."

"What is she to that pleasant-spoken old lady, our hostess ? Her grandchild ?"

"Her grandchild ? No ; old Grizzle only has two sons—Kit and Blaize—a precious pair of hang-dog scoundrels, both of 'em ! and neither of them are married nor likely to be. I don't know what Orrie is to her ; but she has always lived with old Mother Ghastly as long as I can remember, and always was the same queer little wasp she is to this day. I expect she found her under a toadstool, or riding on a rush-blade over from Scotland, or dancing in a fairy ring some bright Hallow Eve night, and captured her."

"Shouldn't wonder. I should like to know something more of her, though."

"Why, you haven't fallen in love with her, have you ?" said Frank.

"Not exactly," said Captain Disbrowe, with a slight laugh. "I feel an interest in the child, though, on account of a little service she did me this evening, and because I think something might be made of her, yet. Well, let her go. And now, about Fontelle. I suppose they received Earnecliffe's letter ?"

"Saying you were coming to pay us a visit—yes," said the boy. "I heard Jack and Gus talking about it, and wondering what sort of an individual you would turn out to be."

"Gus?"

"Why, yes— Oh, I forgot you didn't know. I mean cousin Augusta—Lady Augusta De Vere, if you please."

"*Lady* Augusta? I thought you had no titles over here."

"Haven't we? That's all you know about it, then. Why, every second man you meet is a colonel, and a general, and a squire, and lots of other things. Uncle Rob's a squire—Squire De Vere, you know. But they used to call her Lady Augusta when she was a little girl—she was such a proud, haughty little duchess; and so the name stuck to her ever since."

"She wouldn't be a De Vere if she was not proud," said Disbrowe, quietly.

"Oh, wouldn't she? Well, they call me a De Vere, and anybody that says I'm proud—why, I say they're mistaken, to draw it mild. To be sure, it's not my name; but that's neither here nor there, nor anywhere else, for that matter."

"Not your name?" said Disbrowe, with a stare.

"No, sir!" said Master Frank, emphatically. "My name's Stubbs—but tell it not in Gath. You see, the way of it was, my mother and Squire De Vere's wife were sisters; and when father and mother died, and I went to live at Fontelle, everybody took to calling me De Vere. I was a little shaver, then; and the name's stuck to me ever since, until, sometimes, I don't feel quite sure but what I *am* a De Vere, after all. It's an awful falling off to come down from that pinnacle of high-and-mightydom to plain unromantic, unvarnished Stubbs; but it's the hard, substantial truth, and there's no dodging it."

Captain Disbrowe stroked his mustache, and laughed at Frank's rueful face.

"'What's in a name?' as Juliet says. 'A rose,' you know, 'by any other name would smell as sweet.'"

"I don't believe it. Call it a cabbage, for instance, and how would it sound? If you read in a novel, now, that

a chap presented his lady-love with a cabbage, as an emblem of his affection, what would you say? Why, that he was a cabbage-head himself. Juliet be hanged!" said Frank, in a tone of disgust. "She was in love, and couldn't be expected to be in her proper senses. There's a great deal in a name. Her lover was Romeo Montague. If he had been Romeo Stubbs, I wonder how she would have liked it?"

"Well, as I never had the honor of the young lady's acquaintance, I cannot take it upon myself to answer that question. And so Lady Augusta, and uncle Rob, and cousin Jack, constitute the family at Fontelle Hall?"

"Yes," said Frank, slowly, and looking in the fire: "they do, rather, when I'm not there; and I'm a host in myself. I hope you intend making us a long visit, Captain Disbrowe?"

"Perhaps—if you don't tire of me and turn me out."

"I'll risk that! Jack will like you, I know, and Jack's word is law at Fontelle. By the way, though, cousin Alfred—I suppose I may call you that—what first put it into your head to honor us with a visit, anyway?"

"'Pon my honor, that's a puzzle, my young friend. I don't even know how I ever discovered there was such a place as Americain existence. Oh, come to think of it, Ned Howard, of the Guards, told me. He did a little fighting here, once upon a time; and as I got tired of lounging about the Serpentine, and making love to Lady Janes and Lady Marys, I thought I would try the Hudson, by way of a change. And so Earnecliffe informed me I had a half-uncle, or something, here, and wrote to him to let him know what a nice youth I was, and to warn him to treat me tenderly; and I obtained unlimited leave of absence, and came, and saw, and—no—yes, I did, though!—I conquered an insolent fellow I met at the Mermaid Inn."

"How was that? Who was he?"

"Not acquainted with the gentleman. He was a short, stout, red-haired, red-whiskered individual, with an unpleasant, not to say ferocious, expression of countenance, and an air generally that looked like a cross between a sailor and a hangman."

"Why, it must have been Old Nick. Oh, land of hope



and blessed promise ! if it was him, you had better look out for squalls."

"Ah ! He was ugly enough to be Old Nick, or anything else you like ; but I wasn't aware his Satanic Majesty took visible shape and sported a tarpaulin hat here in these United States."

"Oh, I mean old Nick Tempest. What did you do to him ?"

"Gave him a cut of my horsewhip in the face, by way of a slight hint to be more polite to strangers in future."

"Whew !" said Frank thrusting his hands in his pockets, and indulging in a long, wailing whistle. "Well, then, let me tell you, you have made an inveterate and deadly enemy for life. That fellow's worse than a Corsican—he never forgives an injury."

"Well, there's not much love lost, that's one comfort. Who is he, anyway ?"

"Oh ! the captain of a schooner, and, they say, a buccaneer," said the boy, lowering his voice. "He has been seen cruising round the coast, and it is more than suspected that his deeds are evil. But it won't do to speak of that subject here."

"And why not ?"

"Oh, well, he's thick with old Grizzle, and hand-and-glove with her two precious sons. 'Birds of a feather,' you know, and so on. A sweet set, the whole of 'em !"

"I wonder the authorities don't look after him ?"

"The authorities !" said Frank, contemptuously. "With his fast sailing clipper, he can snap his fingers in the faces of every mother's son of them, and he's wide awake, I tell you. Catch a weazel asleep ; indeed ! But I feel sleepy, and will seek a little virtuous repose in the arms of Morpheus, if you have no objection."

"Not in the least, and I'll copy the example of the 'wise virgins' in the parable, and watch."

"Why don't you take a snooze yourself ?" said Frank, settling himself in his chair, thrusting both hands in his coat-pockets, and putting on a resolute expression that bespoke his unflinching determination to go asleep, in spite of all obstacles.

"For certain good reasons, that I will tell you to-mor-

row, which, if I don't mistake, is already growing gray in the east. Asleep so soon?" said the young man, glancing at Frank, who had dropped off almost instantly. "I wonder if he knew as much as I do about this house, whether he would sleep so easily? Where has the old Jezebel spirited off the men to, I should like to know?"

Drawing closer to the fire, Captain Disbrowe set himself to watch until morning; but, insensibly overcome by drowsiness and fatigue, he dropped fast asleep in ten minutes, and slept soundly—so soundly that he did not, two hours later, hear the door opened, nor the noiseless entrance of old Grizzle Howlet. Softly she crossed the room on tip-toe, and bent over him, and gazed intently as he lay with his head resting easily on his arm, and his handsome face plainly revealed in the gray morning light. Lightly she lifted the clustering waves of his bright brown hair from his forehead, and peered closer and closer in his face—the old sinister smile gradually breaking over her lips. Did she read in that fine and aristocratic-looking countenance a tale of haughty pride, but, slightly veiled under the careless levity of his waking manner?—a tale of dauntless daring and high ambition, that would spurn every obstacle as so many worms in his path, until the goal of his hopes were won? Something of that she must have read, if she were skilled in reading the "human face divine"—for all were legible in that handsome face in its repose.

Suddenly he moved restlessly, and murmured something in his sleep. The woman bent down to hear, but she could only catch the words; "When I come back, Norma."

"When you come back, Norma!" said Grizzle, rising, with her evil smile, and looking down upon the sleeper. "Will you ever come back to Norma, whoever she may be? Oh, Jack De Vere! God grant the day may soon come—when I can see your high pride laid low, and your haughty head under the heel of this gay, proud Englishman, with his fair, young face and scornful heart!—and may Heaven send the day soon when I can repay you a thousandfold for all your taunts, and gibes, and mockery!"

She struck her clenched hand on her breast, as if she

could have beaten down a lion, and her face was livid with the raging passion throbbing in it, yet forcibly held back.

"Hallo! old Mother Hubbard! what are you up to now?" said the voice of Frank, as he got up suddenly, with a yawn, and shook himself. "Hurry up breakfast—will you? I shall have to make tracks for Fontelle in double-quick time this morning, or Jack will be in my wool. Let's have a look at the weather," said he, going to the window and looking out, while old Grizzle silently busied herself in kindling a fire.

"Well, what is your opinion of the weather, my good cousin?" said Captain Disbrowe, awakened by his voice. "Is it snow, rain, hail, or lightning, or a mixture of all?"

"None of 'em," said Frank; "going to be a splendid day, after the storm. The weather here in New Jersey, you see," continued Frank, with a touch of philosophy, "is uncommonly like the female sex; mostly always contrary, and doing what nobody expects it to—all smiles one minute, and all sulks the next. That's the way with you lovely women, ain't it, Grizzle?" said Master Frank, winking at Disbrowe, to intimate that the latter part of his speech might be considered playfully ironical.

Grizzle favored him with a glance of withering contempt, and went steadily and silently on, preparing breakfast, which was soon ready, and sooner dispatched. Then little Orrie brought round their horses, while the young Englishman settled his bill with the hostess.

"And now, madam," he said, fixing his eyes keenly and significantly on her face, "before I bid you good-morning, allow me to thank you for your and your three friends' kind intentions towards me last night; and to advise you, when you next hold a secret conference round the fire, to be sure the door at the foot of the stairs is shut. Good-morning, madame." And with a slight and peculiarly graceful bow and smile, he passed from the house. Not a muscle of the woman's face moved, not the slightest start or sign of guilt did she betray, but with a muttered "Humph!" she folded her arms and looked after them until they were out of sight.

"What did you mean by that?" said Frank, as they rode rapidly along.

"Never mind, now," said Disbrowe; "I shall tell you all about it some other time, for talking at this sharp pace I don't admire."

A rapid ride of nearly five hours, through forest paths and muddy roads—considerably different from what the same route is to-day—brought them, at last, to their journey's end.

"Why didn't you take the shorter way, over the mountains?" Disbrowe asked.

"Oh! well, for various reasons—the first and chief of which is, that I would rather not break my neck just yet, if the public generally don't object. Mountain gorges, and chasms, and torrents, and steep, slippery paths, where a single false step would pitch you to Kingdom Come in a twinkling, are all very pleasant to read about, but in real life I'd just as soon steer clear of them. Jack always takes the mountains, but I haven't enough of the dare-devil in me to try it, I must confess; and, what's more, I ain't at all ambitious to have, either."

"This Jack appears to be quite a hero, in his way, and I feel quite anxious to know him," said Disbrowe.

Again Frank laughed—a peculiar, meaning laugh.

"Oh, I rather guess you and Jack will pull pretty well together, if you are only moderately careful and mind your eye! But there's Fontelle—is it anything like your English home?"

Disbrowe looked and saw a large, irregular, cumbrous-looking old mansion of gray stone, that seemed to have been built at different periods, with two wings—the one at the north heavy and gloomy, and fashioned after some antique style; while the southern one seemed of more modern date and construction, lighter, airier, and more elegant. Extensive and handsome grounds surrounded it, and a long, winding avenue of tall maples led up to the front door. It was a fine old mansion, strongly resembling the old manors so common in England.

"As he named it after Fontelle Park, in England," said Frank, "he had it built, you see, to resemble it as much as possible. Does it really look like the old English house of the De Veres?"

"Very much," said Captain Disbrowe, in evident



pleasure ; "very much, indeed. It only wants the broad lawns, and glades, and the great park, and the deer, and the 'silver star' above the gate, and the gatekeeper's lodge. Do you know the 'silver star,' Master Frank?"

"Don't I?" said Frank. "Is there a day of my life I don't hear of the 'silver star' of the De Veres? Hasn't uncle Rob the family arms emblazoned in the drawing-room?—and doesn't the 'silver star' shine there from year's end to year's end, and never set? But, look here! if that isn't the very Jack you want to see! Jack! Jack! I say!" he called, raising his voice.

He galloped on, followed by Disbrowe, until, suddenly reining, he exclaimed, in a voice full of quiet malice and delight:

"Jack, this is our English cousin. Captain Disbrowe, allow me to make you acquainted with Jack De Vere."

Captain Disbrowe looked up, and sat for a moment stock-still with surprise. Well he might! he was not the first who had been electrified by Jack De Vere!

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## CHAPTER V.

### JACK DE VERE.

"A thing all lightness, life and glee—  
One of the shapes we seem  
To see in visions of the night,  
And should they greet our waking sight  
Imagine that we dream."—HILL.

CAPTAIN ALFRED DISBROWE had raised his handsome eyes, expecting to see a tall, dashing, whiskered, devil-may-care six-footer; but looking up he saw nothing! until he lowered his eyes, and lowered them again, and at last they alighted on a coquettish little riding-hat, perched jauntily on one side of a little head, some four feet or so from the ground.

Captain Disbrowe started and stared; and his stare was returned by the brightest and clearest pair of eyes that ever were set in a human head—returned with compound interest, too. Jack De Vere was a girl—a small, slight, delicate-looking girl, of seemingly not more than sixteen,

and most elegantly and becomingly dressed, who, after her first brief scrutiny, bowed and smiled, and held out her hand, and gracefully welcomed her English cousin to Fontelle Hall.

It was seldom the self-possessed, courteous Captain Disbrowe was at a loss; but for a moment he was really so now, and as he mechanically took the hand she offered, he gazed first at her and then at Frank, so evidently non-plused, that Frank, who, happened to be blessed with a lively sense of the ludicrous, laughed uproariously.

"Jack De Vere," he repeated, like one in a dream.

The young lady withdrew her hand and smiled.

"This is some of your work, Master Frank, with your Jack De Vere! My name is Jacquetta," said she, turning to Disbrowe, "which they have the barbarous taste to transform into Jack—thinking I suppose, a boy's name suits me best. Whether they are right or not, I must leave it to time and your good sense to decide."

"Oh! beg pardon! I see it all now," said Disbrowe; and the next instant he had sprung from his horse, and stood with his hat off before her. "I fear I have appeared rather rude; but I was so surprised! Allow me to redeem my error, and salute my fair cousin."

And taking her hand, he would have suited the action to the word; but Miss Jack drew back, and interposed the other hand as a shield.

"Palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss," she said, coolly. "And I, as a staunch Yankee girl and patriot, have, 'vowed a vow,' ever since the war, of eternal enmity against all Englishmen. So, my very dear cousin, you will have to admire me at a distance, until better acquainted."

"Then permit me." And he raised her hand gallantly to his lips. "I shall try to induce you to break that cruel vow before we part. The sins of a whole nation should not be visited on one individual head."

Though he had bent over the hand he held while speaking he had been looking intently in her face, and trying to decide, strange as it may seem, whether she were pretty or plain.

It was a question that had puzzled others before him, and countless were the different decisions that had been

pronounced on the matter. He saw a small, bright, animated face, full of energy, daring and determination, yet fair and delicate as a tinted rose-leaf in complexion. Her eyes were large and intensely bright, and of the deepest, darkest gray, sparkling and flashing when she was excited, until they seemed of midnight blackness. Her round, white polished forehead, and small erect head, were beautifully shaped, and bespoke a strong, energetic, far-seeing brain within. Her small, rosy mouth would have been perfect, but for the half-mocking, half-sarcastic curl of the short upper lip, whose haughty curve bespoke a pride as high and strong as his own—in a different way. But the look of half-mockery seemed the prevailing expression of the piquant, sparkling little face, whose irregular features owed their chief beauty to their constant animation. Her look of mingled seriousness and mockery it was that so puzzled and half annoyed Disbrowe, and left him, as it did every one else, at a loss to tell whether she was in jest or in earnest. Her hair was soft, silky and beautiful, and hung in clustering, dancing curls around her bewitching little face; but—it was red, uncompromising, defiant red, and no fiction of friends or lovers could make it auburn. And now it flashed and scintillated like wings of flame in the radiant sunshine.

There was something else about Jack De Vere that puzzled and perplexed Disbrowe not a little; and that was, her strong and undefinable resemblance to some one he had met before—who, at that moment, he could not remember. There she stood before him, cool, bright, breezy, airy, and unmistakably fair, reminding him of a saucy boy—a very saucy boy—yet with the air and grace of a lady withal.

From all he had heard of her, Captain Disbrowe judged she must be an Amazon, a romp, a hoyden—the horror and abomination of the refined, fastidious Englishman. Accustomed to the cold *hauteur* and high-bred elegance of the ladies and peeresses of his native land, he shrunk in horror from anything like hoydenism; and an Amazon would have been looked upon by him in about the same way as he would have looked upon a grizzly bear or the great sea-serpent—as something to gaze and shudder at,

at a distance. The light, fragile figure, and fair, delicate face of this young girl seemed, though, to contradict the idea that she could be one of these monsters; but from all he had heard of her from Frank, it left him to infer that she was, and that he must not judge by appearances. Then, too, she had red hair, which he detested as betokening vulgarity and a fiery temper—two revolting things, according to his high and spirituelle notions of the adorable sex; and she bore a boy's name, which was another shock to his particular and fastidious taste. And so altogether, in the very few minutes that he stood watching her, he made up his mind, quite to his own satisfaction, to dislike Jack De Vere, and only think of her as something to smile at and pity.

But if he thought to mortify the young girl before him by such a course, never was self-complacent man more wofully doomed to disappointment. Cool as a Lapland icicle, self-possessed and self-conscious as a crowned queen on her throne, indifferent and careless as the breeze that toyed with her fair, clustering hair, she stood before him, with a pride and ease of manner that in its very depth of quietude, arose and overtopped his own, and gave the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe, brother of an earl and a peer in prospective, to understand that, if he intended to despise her he must do it at a remarkably safe distance. And he, the flattered, courted, and caressed in all the gilded *salons* of brilliant London, who had danced with princesses, flirted with regal duchesses, and made love to Lady Georgianas without number—at whose coming cheeks had flushed, and bright eyes had fallen, and hearts had beat faster—under the cool gaze of whose handsome eyes many a pulse under a diamond bracelet had bounded, found himself now calmly waved back, and told to keep his place, and by the bright, clear glance of those gray eyes made to understand he must remember it, too, until she chose to descend from her pinnacle. For once in his life, the dashing guardsman was made to understand that a handsome face, and fine figure, and gallant bearing, and aristocratic name, were not perfectly irresistible.

"Well, sir," said a quick, imperative voice, in tones of mingled amusement and sarcasm, "what is the decision?"



I see you have come to one. I have undergone a keen scrutiny for the last two or three minutes ; and now for your verdict, my lord judge ! ”

She had faced round so suddenly and unexpectedly, and looked up in his face so keenly, with her peculiar mocking smile, that a slight flush tinged, for an instant, the fine face of Disbrowe in his conscious guilt.

“ Ah, you needn’t speak. I can read my sentence, in that guilty look ; and you have pronounced me a second edition of the bottle-imp—a natural curiosity like the ourang-outang, or any other outlandish animal, and you are just thinking what a fortune some enterprising showman might make by putting me in a cage, and taking me over to London, and exhibiting me as a real, live specimen of that terrific creature—the American female. Come, confess—isn’t that so ? ”

“ Is it possible you can wrong me by such a thought, my dear cousin ? ” he said, recovering himself. “ What can I think of you but that you are the most charming little fairy in existence, and the most enchanting of cousins. ”

“ Do you, really ? ” said the young lady, casting a critical eye to where one of the servants were about to lead off the horses. “ I say, William, mind what you’re at there ! Would you take those horses, reeking hot, into the stables ? Walk them gently up and down for a while, can’t you ? And so that’s your opinion, is it ? hum ! ” she said, with her provoking smile. “ Well, what else do you think about me ? It didn’t take you all that time to conclude I was charming, and what else was it ?—oh, enchanting !—did it ? ”

“ By no means, how could I help thinking you were very beautiful ? ”

“ Dazzlingly beautiful is the term my admirers generally use ; and I like it better, ” amended the young lady.

“ Dazzlingly beautiful, then, be it ; the term is most appropriate, and shows the good taste of your admirers, Miss De Vere. ”

A sudden, hot flush, like a rising flame, leaped into the cheeks of the young girl at the words.

“ Miss De Vere, ” she said, vehemently, “ don’t call me

that! I hate the name! I do hate it!" she said, almost passionately.

He looked at her in amazement, to see her cheeks hot and her eyes flashing for an instant; and then, the next, as she met his gaze as if by magic, her face cleared again, and she looked up at him and laughed.

"Don't be shocked! I hate formality, I mean; and it rather startles me to be called anything so stately as 'Miss De Vere,' " and she mimicked his tone to perfection. "I'm not used to it, you see; and it doesn't agree with my constitution and by-laws either. Call me Jacquetta, or Jack, or I'll come without calling at all, if you prefer it. 'Just whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad'—rather that style of thing, you know."

"With all my heart, Miss Jacquetta, and may I also hope to hear my Christian name in music from your lips."

"To be sure—you didn't expect I intended calling you anything else—did you? and you my own cousin, too," and she laughed, and gave him a glance so full of hidden, mocking meaning that he was more puzzled what to make of her than ever. "And pray what is it? John, Peter, Barnabas, Tom, Dick, or Harry, or what?"

"Neither; it happens to be Alfred De Vere Disbrowe."

"Phew! All that for a name. Suppose we make it Alf, for short, eh? *Apropos* of long names, there is an old Puritan woman who has lived at Fontelle, as a sort of privileged servant, ever since I can remember, and her name is Tribulation Fear the Lord Rawbones—there's a name for you!"

Disbrowe laughed.

"Yes; rather an inconvenient name for every-day use, isn't it?"

"Oh, we call her Tribby, except on festivals, and then she gets her name in full. But now, cousin Alfred, are we to go up to the house; or, as you have exhausted the subject of my innumerable perfections, am I to begin and say pretty things to you?—which?"

"I propose that we adjourn to the house, and I will take all the pretty things for granted. I wish to see my uncle and my other cousins, as soon as possible."

"Well, come along then ; they are both in, as it happens, and will be delighted to see you, of course."

Both walked along together, and ascended a broad flight of marble steps that led up to the massive hall-door, in the center part of the building. This opened into a vast hall, high, dark and silent, and flanked on either side by doors, and with a staircase of polished oak at the further end, leading to the upper rooms. Opening a door to the right, Jacquetta ushered him into a spacious drawing-room, very high, very dark, very grand, and silent, and bearing over the high marble mantel the escutcheon of the house of De Vere, with its brilliant silver star. The furniture was carved and massive, and evidently belonged to a former generation ; and a few rare old pictures, masterpieces of master painters, hung around the walls. The immense windows, reaching almost from floor to ceiling, were hung with dark purple damask, lined with corn-colored silk, and the thick, dark carpet was no dainty Brussels or Turkey affair, but one that had evidently been used for half a century, and was likely to stand half a century more. The chairs, and tables, and sofas were all of the same massive, carved antique pattern ; and the eyes of the young Englishman lit up with pleasure, as he looked around and half-audibly murmured ; "A fit home for a descendant of the old De Veres. I hate new furniture and new houses."

Jacquetta had left him upon his entrance ; and for a time he was left alone to wonder a little at the profound silence of the house, and wonder more what manner of girl this odd cousin of his might be. Before he could come to any satisfactory conclusion, the massive oaken door swung open, and a tall, hale old man, of stately presence and dignified mien, "kindly but frosty," stood on the threshold, with a lady on his arm.

"My dear boy, I'm delighted to see you," he exclaimed in a voice of cordial welcome, as he came forward, and grasping both Disbrowe's hands shook them heartily. "What an unexpected pleasure this is, to be sure ! Bless me ! How like you are to your mother, my poor sister Clara, my dear boy ! You look like a De Vere, every inch of you ! Allow me to make you acquainted with your

cousins—this is my daughter Augusta, and this is my daughter Jacquetta, but you know her already, it appears.”

“I have that pleasure, sir,” said Disbrowe, bowing to “my daughter Augusta,” a tall, haughty, dark-eyed, dark-haired, pale-faced beauty, cold and stately as a duchess, with the fine, proud, aristocratic face of the De Veres—as different from her sister as day from night.

“Ah, is it a pleasure?” said Miss Jacquetta, airily. “I didn’t know. Perhaps, before you are acquainted with me long you will have another notion about that.”

“Tut, tut, sauce-box!” said her father, chucking her under the chin. “Little girls should be seen and not heard, my dear. You mustn’t mind our little Jacky, my boy; she’s a spoiled child, and nothing else, and thinks herself privileged to say whatever she thinks.”

“A rare virtue in this insincere world,” said Disbrowe, politely.

“Is it always a virtue?” said the fair, proud Augusta, lying languidly back in her chair, and lifting her eyes slowly, as though it was too much trouble to raise their heavy lids.

“In Miss Jacquetta it doubtless is and cannot be sufficiently admired, more particularly, as the charming grace with which—”

“There, cousin Alf!” broke in Jacquetta, flinging herself into a chair, and holding up one tiny foot, and looking at it critically, “don’t put yourself out to turn a compliment. I’ll imagine the rest, as you did a while ago, you know. As to his not minding me, papa, I wouldn’t advise him, as a friend, to try it, for—did you ever see an enraged American female, Captain Disbrowe?”

“Not as I am aware of.”

“Well, then, don’t, as long as you can help it; for the forty horse-power essence of wild-cats is nothing to it! It’s something terrific, I tell you, and has to be seen to be appreciated. You cold-blooded English, over there, can’t begin to have the first idea of what it’s like.”

“Come, Jacquetta, come! this won’t do,” said “papa,” fidgeting, and taking a pinch of snuff.

“Why, I hope you consider yourself English. Miss Jacquetta,” said Disbrowe.



"Me ! Not I ! I scorn the idea ! I'm Yankee to the core of my heart ! A regular Jersey true blue ! Me English, indeed ! I look as if I had much of the plodding, sober-going John Bull about me !—don't I ?"

"Now, Jacquetta, my dear, how can you ?" said papa, deprecatingly, while a faint smile dawned on the moonlight face of lady Augusta, and an angry light leaped to the dark eyes of the haughty young Englishman. Fortunately, at that moment a bell rung.

"The first bell," said the master of the house, rising, "dinner will be served in half an hour ; and I presume you will wish a few moments' rest after your long ride."

"I certainly require it," said Disbrowe, running his fingers through the disheveled locks of his rich brown hair ; "and I am rather travel-stained just at present, no doubt."

He held open the door for the young ladies to pass out, as he spoke. The queenly Augusta acknowledged the courtesy by the slightest bend of her proud head ; but Jacquetta looked cunningly up in his face, and laughed, and kissed her hand to him, and danced after her stately sister like an incarnate sunbeam.

Then Mr. De Vere rung the bell, and a spruce chambermaid escorted Captain Disbrowe up-stairs to a long gallery, flanked, like the hall below with doors, and ushered him into what his host had called the "Star Chamber"—a superbly fitted up apartment, with the walls and ceiling gemmed with stars in azure ground, and the cornices fretted with gold network. A large, square, old-fashioned bed, hung with heavy drapery of blue and silver, stood opposite the door, and the large oriole windows were draped with curtains of the same. In the immense fireplace roared and blazed a huge wood fire, that warmed and lit up the whole room, and seemed to make the starry carpet on the floor literally sparkle. An immense mirror, reaching to the ceiling, reflected back the room ; and on a large oak table beside it lay books and drawings, and numerous elegant toilet trifles. But none of these objects attracted the eye of Disbrowe—something else had caught his attention the moment he entered, and held it chained still. Over the bronze mantel hung a picture in an oval frame, heavily carved ; a portrait of a small, mocking, tantalizing,

bewitching face, with short, waving curls, and sparkling, flashing, gray eyes, scintillating with mirth and mischief, and hidden power. It was a portrait of Jacquetta De Vere; and the red lips seemed wreathed into a mocking smile, and the flashing eyes seemed to deride him as they met his own. The head was half turned, as if she were looking back—just as he had seen her when she left the room a moment before, with the same wicked, half-defiant, half-laughing grace.

Leaning his arm on the mantel, and quite forgetful of the flight of time, he stood there and looked at it. What thoughts were thronging through his mind at that moment? Did he think of the prediction of the weird witch of the lone inn—of the dark, loathsome pit, at the bottom of which, her high pride laid low, she was to lie at his feet? Did he think of it afterward, in the dark days that were to come, when he knew a doom worse than death was hers—that fair, high-spiritual young girl, whose bright face smiled on him from the wall now?

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SECRET.

“She said, and raised her skinny hand.  
As in defiance, to high heaven.  
And stretched her long, lean finger forth,  
And spoke aloud the words of power.”  
—THALABA.

THE dinner-bell had rung, and a long interval had succeeded, but still the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe stirred not—still he stood gazing on that picture, charmed, fascinated, as a bird is charmed and fascinated by a serpent. Not that the knowing, dashing young guardsman, the gay man of fashion, had much of the innocence and simplicity of a bird about him, and neither would I insinuate that Miss Jacquetta De Vere had anything of the dark and dreadful subtlety of a serpent; but certainly it was some sensation akin to snake-charming that invited his eyes to that piquant, entrancing, yet anything but beautiful face. It was not love—on the contrary, it was more like positive

dislike ; but still he stood and gazed, quite forgetful that he was to arrange his dress, and that the bell had rung ten minutes before, and that, in all probability, the original was waiting down-stairs, and in no very sweet humor at that same waiting.

A sharp knock at the door startled him at last from his reverie, and, in answer to his "Come in!" the door opened, and Frank entered.

"What! not ready yet, and the dinner waiting for the last ten minutes, and Uncle Rob the most particular old gentleman that ever wore a wig! Whew!" said Master Frank, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and beginning to whistle.

"Is it possible?" said Disbrowe, starting up, shocked at his want of thought. "I deserve the bastinado for my neglect. I can't tell what I was thinking of, to forget myself so," he said, as he hurriedly began to arrange his toilet.

"Well, hurry up, and I'll wait for you," said Frank, seating himself. "Jack advised uncle to send up one of the kitchen-maids to help you to make yourself fascinating—it took you so long. So they've put you in the Star Chamber, have they? There's Jack's picture. I remember the day she hung it there, and called it the brightest star of the lot. Do you think her good-looking?"

"Certainly—you know there is no such thing as a bad-looking woman," said Disbrowe, politely.

"Oh, isn't there? What a blessed beauty Mother Grizzle is, for instance! Gusty's good-looking, though, ain't she?"

"Very beautiful," said Disbrowe, in all sincerity this time. "She is a true *De Vere*."

"Which would you take to be the oldest, now—Jack or Gus?" said Frank.

"Miss Augusta, of course," said Disbrowe, surprised at such a question.

"I knew it," said Frank, with a chuckle; "but she ain't, though. Jack's two or three years older."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Disbrowe, in astonishment. "I can scarcely credit it!"

"Well, you may, then. Gusty's only eighteen, and Jack's

twenty, and more, for all I know. She looks younger, don't she? But that's because she's so small and fair—fair people always look younger than they really are, you know."

"Younger! I hardly took her to be sixteen," said Disbrowe. "She certainly does not look that."

"She is, then, and she makes no bones of telling it, either; and then it makes her look like a little girl, wearing her hair flying about her face in curls, instead of braiding it, and fixing it up as Gusty does. Do you like red hair?"

"No—but then Miss Jacquetta's is auburn, is it not?" said Disbrowe, with another polite fiction.

"Auburn!" said Frank, contemptuously. "It won't be well for you to tell Jack that, any way! She's proud of her leonine locks, I can tell you, and calls it her crowning glory, and wouldn't change it, she says, for any other color under the sun. I remember Will Redfern called her a young lioness once, with her red mane, after she horse-whipped him one day, in the street."

Disbrowe shuddered.

"Horse-whipped him! Good heavens! what did she do that for? It can't be possible, surely."

"Yes, it is possible, and served him just right, I say; and, what's more, she wouldn't mind doing it over again. He insulted a girl, and she told Jacquetta; and as the girl had no father or brother to take her part, Jack gave him particular fits with her horse-whip the next time she met him. Oh! she's spunky, I promise you! Take care you don't anger her some day," said Frank, laughing, "or she'll be after you with a sharp stick."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Disbrowe, in horror. "What an Amazon she is! Who would ever think a De Vere could do such an atrocious thing!"

"I know another De Vere who did such an atrocious thing, and it wasn't to avenge distressed innocence, either," said Frank, maliciously.

"You mean me, I suppose," said Disbrowe, laughing, "but I'm not a girl. Perhaps, though, it's the fashion for young girls to act so here in America."

"Oh, every one's independent here—do just as they



like, and don't care a snap for their neighbor; and our Jack's the pluckiest one of the lot. 'Although she's but little, she's made of good mettle,' as the old song says."

"Do you know," said Disbrowe, brushing his tangled locks, "she reminds me so much of some one else I have seen—I can't think who; a shadowy resemblance in every motion."

"I think she look like little Orrie Howlet, at the inn, if that's what you mean," said Frank; "although Orrie's a regular little squaw for darkness, and Jack's fair as she well can be. I know they always remind me of one another—and others say so, too."

"Yes, now I think of it, she does," said Disbrowe, meditatively; "but somehow she's not the one I mean. By Jove! I have it, now," he cried, with a start; "she looks like the fellow I horse-whipped—a pocket edition of that same old coon, revised and improved, with the very same inso—the very same look in her eyes that he has."

"Good gracious!" said Frank, laughing, "here's a discovery! Our Jack like old Nick Tempest! What would Jack say if she heard that? Not but what I believe she would take it as a compliment; for she fairly dotes on dare-devils, like him, and would make a tip-top wife for a salt-sea rover or an Italian brigand."

"Speaking of brigands," said Disbrowe, "reminds me that I saw with old Nick Tempest, as you call him, a most enchanting little specimen of that article in a real brigandish rig. Now, then," he added, giving a few finishing touches, "I am at your service."

Both descended to the dining-room, where they found Mr. De Vere and his daughters awaiting them. Disbrowe's apology for detaining them, was smilingly accepted, and all were soon seated round the ample board of the master of Fontelle Hall.

During the meal Disbrowe made some inquiries about the society of the neighborhood and the gentry.

"Gentry," said lady Augusta, with her languid smile, "we have no such thing here, captain. 'All men are born free and equal,' isn't that what the Declaration of Independence says, papa?"

"How do you, Miss De Vere, believe in such humbug as that?" said Disbrowe, with a curling lip.

"I think," said the young lady, steadily and with a rising flush tinging, for a moment, her pale cheek, "that pride of birth is carried to an absurd excess in England. Will it redeem a mean or dishonorable character that he can boast his forefathers entered with the Conquest, and can display a coat-of-arms that reaches back for a score of generations. I think," she said, with increasing warmth, and an unusual light in her dark eyes, and an unusual flush on her pale cheek, "that a man of the people, who rises by his own unaided efforts in the battle of life, to power and distinction, deserves a thousandfold more esteem and respect, and should be a prouder man, than he who can trace his descent back to the days of William the Conqueror, and can boast of nothing else. The great Earl of Oxford, from whom we De Veres boast we have descended, was a great man doubtless, in his day, and would have spurned the people as the dust under his feet; but whether will he or Washington, the Man of the People, be longest remembered? Which is the greater, let posterity decide. One was forgotten many and many a year ago; but while the world lasts will the other ever cease to be remember and revered?"

"Bravo! encore! I say," shouted Frank, delighted.

"Really, Augusta," said her father laying down his knife and fork, and looking at her, "a change has come o'er the spirit of your dream lately. Two years ago, my dear Alfred, there never was a greater aristocrat than the young lady who has just made that republican speech; she would have trodden on the necks of the people as remorselessly as your haughty brother, Earnecliffe, himself, and thought them honored by the condescension, when, lo and behold! she suddenly faces about, and becomes a red hot rebel and republican—stands up for the people, and advocates equal rights, and liberty, fraternity and equality, and all the rest of it, as furiously as if she were one of a French mob. What has changed her tactics, I don't know; but changed they are, with a vengeance, and I expect her to crown it all by marrying a Smith, Jones, or

Robinson, one day shortly ! I shan't be at all surprised, if she does."

He laughed as he spoke ; but, at the last words a deadly paleness swept over the beautiful face of his daughter, leaving her even to her lips, cold and white as marble. Disbrowe lifted his eyes, and looked at her, as if a sudden light had dawned upon him, and slightly smiled.

"Miss Augusta is too stanch a De Vere ever to marry beneath her," he said, significantly.

"Be assured of that, sir!" she said, haughtily. "I never shall!"

"That's my proud Lady Augusta!" said her father, laughing. "But what's got into my little Jack-o'-lantern here that she sits so still?"

"It's so seldom I hear sensible people talk, papa," said Jacquetta, demurely, "that I like to listen in silent awe—when they do—that's all."

"I am afraid Miss Jacquetta is inclined to be sarcastic," said Disbrowe, coloring slightly at her covert smile.

"Me!" said Jacquetta, raising her eyebrows in innocent surprise. "Oh, no! I hope you don't suspect me of anything so shocking!"

"Tell him about our gentry, puss," said Mr. De Vere, with a sly chuckle. "You know every one within forty miles round."

"Yes; and further, too," said Jacquetta. "And I shall be only too happy to take cousin Alfred around and introduce him. First, there's the Brontes—their real name is Brown, but that's no matter—and there are six girls, the oldest of whom has been eighteen for the last five years, and intends to be for five more; and the rest of whom, likewise, have come to a stand-still, and are firmly resolved to set time at defiance, and not grow a day older until Seraphina Clementina is married. Their father will give them five hundred dollars apiece fortune, and their husbands a share in the pork and tallow business; and it would be an excellent thing for cousin Alfred if he was to get one of them. Then there's Miss Arethusa Desmond, a limp young lady, on the beanpole pattern, with white hair and eyes, who never pronounces the letter 'r,' and who informed me the other day she had 'just wead King

Leah, a play by one Mistah Shakspeah, and she liked it so vewy much that she intended making her pa buy her the very next he wrote.' Then there's Mrs. Flartie, a 'furriner,' whose name in the original Greek is O'Flaherty, and who snubs her husband—worthy little soul—till he daren't sneeze in her presence, without asking permission first, and who is madly jealous of me because I get the honor of being an innocent little creature, and who calls me an 'impident little red-headed rip' when I'm not listening. Then there is Miss Betsy Boggs and her two sisters, all of whom will make a dead set at our handsome cousin"—and Jacquetta bowed, and smiled across the table, in the old malicious way—"and capture him or die in the attempt. Think how it would look when Lord Earnecliffe would read it in the papers: Married—By the Reverend Jedediah Spinitout, Captain Alfred De Vere, late of Her Majesty's Guards, to Miss Betsy Boggs, eldest daughter of Simon Peter Boggs, of Boggs' Hole, Jersey."

Here a roar of laughter from Frank interrupted Jacquetta.

"What a malicious little imp!" thought Disbrowe, inwardly wishing the wicked fairy ten feet deep in Thames' mud at that minute.

"That's all, I think," said Jacquetta, reflectively. "Oh, no! there's Mrs. Grizzle Howlet, an estimable lady, and mighty pretty to look at, who lives over there among the frogs in the swamps somewhere. It's not likely you would fall in love with her, though, as she's a widow, and you might object to a second-hand wife."

"Oh, I am not particular!" said Disbrowe, carelessly; "but I have seen the lady in question, and I rather think, if I did, she would soon be a widow again. As it is, she came pretty near bringing my earthly career to an end; and only for the providential interposition of my young friend, Frank there, you would hardly have seen me at Fontelle to-day, I fancy."

All looked at him in curiosity, and the young guardsman promptly related his nocturnal adventure at the old house. Mr. De Vere and Augusta listened in silent horror, Frank uttered an exclamation of dismay, and Jacquetta puckered up her rosy mouth and—whistled!



"The atrocious old hag!" exclaimed Mr. De Vere. "Good heavens! that such a den should so long have existed in a peaceable community! I remember, now, that about eight months ago there was a rumor of a missing Frenchman—a stranger here—and of whom no tidings could ever be discovered. He must have been the one the little girl spoke to you of. I shall have the old witch and her two rascally sons arrested before another sun sets."

"I often did hear," said Jacquetta, "that any one born to be hanged will never be drowned; and now I shall think it applies to other cases besides drowning."

"Which implies, you think, an elevated destiny for me," said Disbrowe.

"What do you say to riding over with me to-morrow, Alfred?" said Mr. De Vere. "We will go to Green Creek, a town about a quarter of a mile from this, and get three or four men to accompany us. The accursed crew! they ought to be lynched!"

"I am quite at your service, my dear sir," said Disbrowe. "It will be a good deed to rid the world of such a gang."

"To-morrow, then, we'll see the secrets of that old sink of iniquity brought to light, and Grizzle Howlet and her sons and worthy brother in chains," said Mr. De Vere.

"Not quite so fast, my good sir; I will have to be consulted about that!" said a loud, harsh voice, as the door was flung violently open, and Grizzle Howlet herself stood before them. All sprung to their feet in amazement. A frightened servant came behind her and said, in alarm, to Mr. De Vere:

"If you please, sir I couldn't stop her—she would come. I didn't intend to let her in—"

"Leave the room!" interrupted Mr. De Vere, waving his hand.

The man vanished, glad to get the door between him and the fierce intruder; and Grizzle, folding her arms over her breast, regarded them with her dark, evil sneer.

"Well, most potent, grave and reverend seignors, and ladies, too," she said; "so you had it all settled to arrest old Grizzle Howlet and her sons, and clap them into prison, and then hang them for robbery and murder? What

a pity so elaborate a scheme should end in smoke, as so many other schemes have done before ! ”

“ Is the woman mad ? ” said Mr. De Vere, astounded, “ to come here like this, knowing her guilt ; for such an act is certainly the very climax of madness ! ”

“ No ; I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of sober reason, ’ as you shall soon find to your cost. What would you say to me, if I were to tell you that you will not only let me go forth free, but safe from your interference from henceforth ? ”

“ You will soon have my answer, ” said Mr. De Vere, seizing the bell-rope and ringing a violent peal.

“ Call your servants as fast as you like ! ” said the woman, with a look of contempt ; “ but before they, or you, lay a finger on me, I must and will have a word with that young lady there ! ” And she pointed to Augusta, who stood regarding her with mingled horror and loathing.

“ We will see about that, ” said Mr. De Vere, calmly.

“ I tell you, ” said the woman, raising her arm and speaking with a sort of passionate earnestness, “ it will be better for you if you do—until the very day of your death, you, and all who bear your proud name, will rue it if you do not ! Listen to me, lady—you who stand there so queenly in your haughty pride and scorn—it will be better for you to hear what I have to say ; for I have your secret and another besides, that you ought to have known long before this. ”

A frightful paleness overspread the haughty face of Augusta, and, with a faint cry, she caught and steadied herself by a chair. As she did so, the door opened and a servant appeared.

“ Papa, let me hear her ! Send the man away ! I must hear her, papa ! ” she said, wildly, taking a step toward her.

“ Nonsense, Augusta ! ” said her father, sharply. “ Hear her, indeed ! the old impostor ! Reynolds, go and bring William and James here ! ”

The servant disappeared, and old Grizzle, folding her cloak closer about her, sat down, with her evil sneering smile.

“ Very well—be it so, then. I will go to prison ; and

the very day I do, your secret, August De Vere, shall be blown by the four winds of heaven over all the land—and what's more, another secret that I came here to-day to tell you—one that you would give the broad lands of Fontelle to hear. Remember that!"

"Oh, I must hear her! I must, papa!" cried Augusta gasping for breath, and looking ready to faint.

It was strange to see the calm, the stately, the haughty Augusta De Vere moved like this. In all his life her father had never seen anything like it before; and now he gazed upon her, thunderstruck.

"In Heaven's name, what is the meaning of this, Augusta? What secret is this wretched old woman talking about?"

"Oh, I cannot tell you! I dare not tell you! but I must hear her!" exclaimed Augusta, distractedly, as she went over and stood close beside the woman.

"I must tell you in private," said Grizzle, looking around.

"You must not leave the room!" said Mr. De Vere, sternly. "Jacquetta, tell the servants to wait, and turn the key of the door and let this farce end!"

Jacquetta, looking astonished and bewildered, obeyed.

"Don't listen, then! Stand off!" said Grizzle, with an angry wave of her hand. "A De Vere should not be an eavesdropper. Come over here, young lady," she said, taking Augusta by the arm, and leading her to the remotest corner. Captain Disbrowe walked to the window and looked out. Jacquetta bent over the table, with her back toward them; and Mr. De Vere, looking angry, astonished, and half-alarmed, stood, with a frowning brow, regarding them.

So nearly ten minutes passed—during which Grizzle talked in a fierce, rapid, hissing whisper, without once stopping, and grasping Lady Augusta's arm in a vise-like grip. As she went on, a frightful change passed over the young girl. One arm was half raised, her blanched lips sprung, quivering, apart, her eyes strained and staring, an awful darkness, as if she were strangling, settling on her face, and with it a look of horror—of wildest, most unspeakable horror—fell.

Suddenly there was the sound of a heavy fall, followed by a cry from Grizzle—a sharp, quick cry of alarm echoed by one longer and more passionate from Mr. De Vere. Disbrowe and Jacquetta faced round in terror to behold Augusta lying on the floor, with her father and Grizzle bending over her, and a dark stream of blood slowly oozing from her mouth.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MIDNIGHT MUSIC.

“The midnight hour will soon be here—  
That awful hour !  
When graves yawn wide and the dead occupants  
Mingle with earthly life.”

“LIFT her up,” said the loud, harsh voice of Grizzle ;  
“she has ruptured an artery—that is all.”

She attempted to lift her herself, as she spoke, but she was furiously hurled back by Mr. De Vere.

“Woman, begone ! touch her not !” he cried, in a voice of mingled rage and anguish. “You have slain my child !”

“She is not dead, I tell you,” said Grizzle, coolly.  
“Rupturing an artery is a small affair.”

“Peace, you old hag !” said Disbrowe, fiercely. “You have done mischief enough, now ! How dare you speak, after what you have done ?”

“Dare !” said Grizzle, with a short laugh ; “I would dare as much as any De Vere among you ; and verily, you come of a daring race. If haughty ladies,” she said pointing to the still insensible Augusta, “will commit crimes —yes, crimes ! I repeat it ; so never start, and look fierce, my young soldier—crimes that even I, murderess and all as I am, shudder to think of, they must suffer the consequences.”

“You shall suffer the consequences, you old murderess !” shouted Mr. De Vere, furiously, as he laid Augusta on the sofa, and turned toward the door. “By the heavens above us ! you shall never go free another hour, for this !”



But the tall form of Grizzle interposed between him and the door, and her long, commanding arm waved him back.

"No," she said, resolutely, fixing her eyes sternly on his face; "you shall not go—for your own sake, you shall not go. It is not that I bear any regard for you—it is not that I bear any love for one of your proud name—it is not that I do not hate, from the very depths of my soul, *one* who bears it"—and her fierce eyes seemed, for an instant, to blaze with a red, lurid fire, as they fixed themselves on Jacquetta, who knelt beside her sister—"but for a reason of my own, you shall not bring disgrace on yourself, disgrace on your house, disgrace on all the name of De Vere, as yet. For I tell you, Robert De Vere, uncle of an English peer, as you are—the haughtiest among England's haughty sons—if this were known, the whole world would spurn your daughter—spurn her in loathing and horror; the very children in the street would shrink in terror and affright from her wherever she would appear. Recoil as you will, grow white as you listen, yet I tell you, man, as God hears me, I speak the truth."

There was an almost passionate solemnity in her tones; and there was something awe-inspiring and terrific in the weird gesture with which she raised her arm and pointed upward, as if calling Him she had named to witness the truth of her words. Mr. De. Vere reeled, as if he had been struck a blow for an instant; then, as his eye fell on the high noble face of his proud daughter—on the pure, stainless, marble-like brow, and sweet, beautiful lips, the conviction that she was merely playing upon his fears returned; for the idea of any crime in connection with that noble-minded, stainless girl, was an utter and most revolting impossibility.

"It is false, you miserable hag!—you second Jezebel!" he said, furiously. "Dare to mention my daughter's name in association with any crime again, and by all the saints! I will be tempted to forget you are a woman, and strangle you on the spot!"

"That is easier said than done," said Grizzle, folding her arms, with a short laugh. "Two could play at that

game and, as a friend, I wouldn't advise you to try it with me."

"My dear sir," interposed Disbrowe, laying his hand on his arm, as he saw the storm of passion rising in his uncle's face, "be calm. Do not heed her words. Let nothing be done until Augusta recovers, and then let us learn from her what mysterious power this woman has over her, and act accordingly."

"Ha! ha!" said Grizzle, mockingly. "You think she will tell you—don't you? Don't you hope she may? Yes, I will wait till she recovers. I have no other intention, my handsome young friend, and you will 'act accordingly.' Oh, no doubt of it!" And she sat down, with a short laugh.

"Shan't I go for a doctor, uncle?" said Frank, looking daggers at Grizzle. "And I can bring a constable up from Green Creek at the same time, and fix this old witch's flint for her."

"No, wait, Frank; don't go," said the voice of Jacquetta. "Don't go yet. Augusta is recovering. We must hear what she says before you go for any one."

Her words banished everything from the minds of all but anxiety for Augusta. All gathered round her sofa as she slowly opened her heavy, dark eyes, and looked dimly around.

"Augusta, darling—my precious child! are you better?" said her father, in a choking voice, as he knelt down beside her and took her hand.

She passed her hand in a vague, lost sort of way across her forehead, as if trying to recall something that had escaped her memory.

"I thought—I thought—something happened, papa, didn't it?" she said, confusedly.

"Do not talk—lie still. You have hurt yourself, dearest. Shall we send for a doctor?" said Jacquetta, softly kissing the pale lips.

The wandering eyes still roved confusedly around, and the pale fingers still passed wistfully over the pale brow. Grizzle Howlet arose noiselessly from her seat, and her tall form towering upward like a grim, gray stone statue, at last arrested the lost, vacant gaze.

Slowly over the beautiful face again settled that look of utter, voiceless, awful horror. The small hands closed and clenched until the nails pierced the delicate palms, the slight form grew rigid and death-like, and a grayness like that of approaching dissolution, crept over every feature. Once or twice she essayed to speak, but only a choking, dying sound came forth from her blanched lips ; and in the glazing eyes and colorless face, over every other feeling, still came that dreadful look of unutterable horror.

"Augusta, dearest ! Oh heavens ! Augusta, what is the meaning of this ?" gasped Jacquetta, in terror.

"Oh, my God ! what have I done !" came in a low, wailing, passionate cry of utter despair, from the white lips of Lady Augusta.

"Oh, my sister ! my darling sister !" cried Jacquetta, wringing her pale fingers, while the others seemed unable to speak, "what is this ? Oh, Augusta, what does this mean ?"

"What it would strike you dead with horror to hear ! What I would sooner be bound at the stake than reveal ! What will blight my life, lose my soul, consume my heart, make every moment of my life a torture such as you cannot even conceive of ! May God grant me a speedy death !" she cried, passionately ; and then, dropping her upraised arm, she sunk back, deathlike, and collapsed.

"Oh, Heaven help us ! she has gone crazy !" said Jacquetta, still wringing her pale fingers in the first paroxysm of her terror and alarm : while her father knelt, with his face hidden in his hands, in speechless grief ; and Disbrowe and Frank looked on in consternation.

"She is not crazy," interrupted the harsh, impatient voice of Grizzle ; "she is as sane as you, and speaks the truth. Peace !" she said, impetuously, as they would have interrupted her. "I *will* speak to her, and end this scene. Miss Augusta De Vere, listen to me ! Ah ! I see you are doing it," she said with her customary sneer, as she beheld the wild, dark eyes riveted, with a strange, stony glare, to her face. "Your father wants to imprison me on suspicion of robbery and murder, and if he

does, *you know the alternative!* One word from you will effect my release—and—I await that word!”

She folded her mantle closer around her tall, gaunt form, and stood stiff and statue-like in her usual bolt upright fashion, waiting as calmly as though it were the simplest matter in the world.

“Papa! papa! let her go! let her go at once! My eyes loathe the sight of her!” cried Augusta, clasping her hands over her eyes, with a shudder that shook her whole frame.

“Let her go? Never! the accursed hag!” cried her father, starting up. “She shall swing for what she has done, as sure as there is law or justice in the land!”

“Papa!” almost shrieked Augusta, half-springing to her feet, “you do not know what you are saying! Papa! would you kill me? Oh! let her go at once—for my sake—for your own sake—for God’s sake! let her go!” she cried, falling from her seat prostrate on the floor at his feet.

“Augusta *you* do not know what you are saying,” said her father, almost sternly, as he raised her up. “This woman is a murderess!”

“And your daughter is *worse!*” she passionately cried, flinging herself on the sofa, and then starting up again, as if deranged by some inward, gnawing, unutterable pain. “Oh, saints in heaven! what will become of me? Papa! papa! let her go, if you would not see me dead at your feet!”

She was terrific to look at, as she beat her clenched hand on her breast, and tore at it as if she would have plucked out the unendurable agony gnawing there; her eyes starting from their very sockets; her face as awfully white as that of a galvanized corpse. Even Jacquetta shrunk a step or two from her, in momentary horror.

“Mr. De Vere, and you all,” cried Grizzle, with one of her slow, majestic waves of the arm and in the measured commanding tones she had formerly used on the stage. “listen to me. You see the power I have over this haughty girl—a *real* power; for, mark you, it is no imaginary crime she accuses herself of, but one that would curdle your heart’s blood with horror to hear—one so aw-



ful that it is *nameless* ! Yes ; so seldom is it heard of, that no name has ever been given to it. And now, Robert De Vere, proud son of a proud sire, as sure as heaven is above us, if you do not let me go forth free, this secret sin shall be blown over the length and breadth of the land, to your everlasting disgrace, and that of all who bear your name. Refuse, and your daughter will either go mad or die at your feet ! Look at her, and see if she is not on the verge of madness now ! Consent, and I will give you my word—and, what is more, will keep it, too—never to molest any traveler or wayfarer who may stop at my house again—never ! I confess there was one—but only one—we robbed and *silenced* ; and it is true that this nephew of yours might have shared the same fate, but for something like a providential interposition—if one believed in such things. But let me go free, and I faithfully promise to keep your daughter's secret and never to molest any one again. Refuse me, and it will be at your peril ! ”

Let her go, for Heaven's sake ! ” exclaimed Disbrowe, “ before you drive your daughter insane. What is her life, or that of a dozen miserable wretches like her compared to that of my cousin ? ”

Grizzle turned her eyes on him with her sneering smile, and seemed about to reply ; but whether intimidated by the bright, fierce light in the young soldier's eye, or unwilling to irritate them further, she prudently thought better of it, and discreetly held her tongue.

“ Go, then,” said Mr. De Vere, trembling with rage and anguish ; “ and may Heaven's worst curses go with you ! ”

Grizzle smiled slightly and bowed, and met Jacquetta's flashing eye with a look of exultant triumph. Returning it with one of mingled defiance and disgust, the young girl made her a stern motion to go, and, unlocking the door, held it open for her to pass.

“ You wear *your* chains so gracefully, my pretty little dear,” said Grizzle, as she went out, “ that I don't know any one better qualified to teach your sister the virtue of resignation. Whoever would imagine you to be—*what you are* ? ”

"Begone!" exclaimed Jacquetta, stamping her foot passionately.

With one of her short, scornful laughs, so galling to listen to, the woman passed out; and Jacquetta, turning suddenly round, met the eyes of Disbrowe fixed full upon her as if in wonder at the last words. To his surprise, her bold, bright glance fell, and her face, a moment before deadly pale, grew deepest crimson—crimson to the very edges of her hair,—as she turned away and averted her head.

Augusta had thrown herself on her face on the sofa, as the woman went out; and now lay as still as if the speedy death she had prayed for had already mercifully settled her agonized heart-throbs.

Tenderly Jacquetta bent over her, and essayed to raise her up.

"Augusta, dearest, what is it? Oh, tell me—tell your father! Do not look so dreadfully!" she said, imploringly.

"Oh, let me go to my room! Do not speak to me, or I shall die!" she cried out, rising up, and holding out her hands before her, like one blind.

"Come, then; let me help you," said Jacquetta, passing her arm round her waist.

As she turned to obey, her eye fell on her father, sitting bowed down in a chair, his face hidden in his hands. The next instant, she was kneeling at his feet, clasping his knees.

"Papa, dearest papa, speak to me, your own Augusta! Oh, papa, do not say you curse me for what I have done!"

"Curse you, my darling child?" he said, looking sorrowfully up. "Oh, Augusta, what *have* you done? *What* is this you have done?"

"Oh, papa, do not ask me!" she exclaimed, in a dying, despairing voice. "It would kill you to know! Only say that, if ever you do hear, if ever it is known, you will not curse the memory of your miserable child, who will not live long to grieve you now."

"Oh, Augusta, hush! What are you saying?" whispered Jacquetta, raising her up. "Come with me—come to your room."

"Only say that, papa ! dearest, kindest papa ! only say that you will never curse the memory of your wretched daughter !" pleaded Augusta sinking lower and lower at his feet.

"My dear child, I never will. God bless you ! Go," he said, putting one trembling hand up before his face.

She arose, slowly and heavily, and suffered Jacquetta to lead her from the room.

And Mr. De Vere, with his face averted and hidden by his hand, sat perfectly still, his drooping head and the heaving of his strong chest alone betokening his emotion. Disbrowe, lost in wonder, stood looking out of the window on the deepening night ; and Frank, though he would have been inclined to knock any one down who would have ventured to insinuate such a thing, stood winking both eyes at once, very hard, and the trees before the window looked crooked as if seen through tears.

Presently Jacquetta returned, and coming over to Disbrowe, touched him lightly on the arm. He looked down in her pale, grave face—so different from the sparkling, animated countenance of the morning—and waited to hear what she had to say.

"You will pardon me, I am sure, Captain Disbrowe," she said, hurriedly, "after what you have seen and heard, if I suggest the propriety of your retiring at once. You will not find any of us, I am afraid, very entertaining companions to-night ; and besides, you must be tired after your journey."

"Most certainly," said Disbrowe, cordially. "I was about to ask permission to retire as a favor. I hope Miss Augusta will be better to-morrow. No ; don't ring. I can find my room myself. Good night."

And he was gone.

Very cheerful did his pleasant room, with its bright fire, look that evening, chill with the raw, wintry blasts of early April. The dark, oaken wainscotting sparkled and shone in the ruddy light of the fire and the stars on the walls and ceiling were fairly blinding in their glancing brightness. But brightest of all still, was the pictured face that smiled down on him from over the man-

tel—that bright, piquant, coquettish little face, so different from the dark, grave one he had seen it a moment before.

He drew an arm-chair close up to the fire, and sat down ; and, with his boots elevated on the fender, a cigar between his lips, his handsome head leaning against the cushions and his bright, bold, dark eyes fixed intently upon it, he lay and watched. Fitfully that witching little face smiled upon him from between the blue curling wreaths of scented vapor, and, as he watched it, a curious smile broke over his face, as if in answer. A curious, musing smile, that seemed to say : “I wonder if I could make the original smile on me like that, if I were to try.” He glanced with that same inexplicable look in the full-length mirror, and the tall, graceful figure, the bold, handsome face, with its clustering locks of rich brown hair, and dark, bright, handsome eyes, were certainly not likely to contradict the idea. There was nothing of the fop in that look, however ; and the next moment the smile was gone, the cigar in the fire, and with his hands in his pockets, he was pacing up and down the room, and whistling. “Hear me, Norma.”

Then he thought of this other proud, stately cousin of his, this haughty Lady Augusta, this “true De Vere,” and every other feeling was merged and lost in wonder ; and the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe began to cogitate whether he had not got among a lot of escaped lunatics by some mistake or other. Then he thought of old Grizzle Howlet, and her strange power ; and of this mysterious secret and hidden crime ; and became shocked, and revolted, and unbelieving at the thought of crime with this proud, noble-looking girl. Then he thought of the singularly beautiful Spanish boy he had seen, the “little brigand,” as he inwardly termed him, and became puzzled once more—for something about him was strangely yet unaccountably familiar. Then he thought of Captain Nick Tempest, and of his singular and undefinable resemblance to Jacquetta ; and that brought his thoughts back to where they had started from. And resuming his seat and his former position, he lit another cigar, leaned back, and, for over an hour, sat



there and watched that portrait without once removing his eyes.

At last he awoke to the consciousness that it was beginning to grow late, and that he was both tired and sleepy ; and rising with a yawn, he bade a sort of mental good-night to his silent companion, prepared for bed, protested in confidence to himself that the said bed was like some old tomb, threw himself upon it, and in ten minutes was sound asleep.

Hours passed ; the night wore on ; the fire flickered and smoldered fitfully ; and still he slept. All was silent as the grave through the vast mansion, when suddenly, with a strange start and a shock, and a feeling as if a strong hand was on his throat, he sprung up in bed—awake !

There was a sound in the air ; the sound of music, soft, sweet, and far off. He awoke bewildered, and looked around, at a loss to know where he was. The fire sent out a sudden jet of red-flame, and it fell bright and livid on the pictured face ; and it seemed to him, as he looked up, that the eyes were alive and glared fiercely and redly down upon him, with a weird, unearthly look. The sight restored memory ; but still—was he walking or dreaming ?—the air was full of music yet.

He sat up and listened breathlessly. Such music as it was, in the dead silence of the lonesome midnight ! Soft, low and unexpressibly sweet ; now dying away in a faint, wailing cry, like a voice in pain ; now rising softly and sweetly as an angel voice ; and anon swelling out high, grand and sublime, like the notes of a triumphal march, till the listener's heart bounded in time, and every pulse leaped as if he had been a Frenchman, listening to the Marseillaise. Still he heard it, now high, now low ; now wild and agonized ; now soft, plaintive and sweet ; now swelling high and grand, with one vast, thundering crash, and again dying away in a low, sobbing sound—as of a strong heart in strong agony. Oh, never was earthly music like that ! Entranced, enraptured, he sat and listened, dimly wondering if the heavens had opened, and those were angel voices he heard, chanting once again the old, sublime strains : “Peace on earth, and good will to men,”

It died away at last—died away in a long, shuddering echo—its faint burden shivering with pain ; and then the silence of the grave reigned. For hours he sat listening, straining his hearing to catch the faintest sound : but nothing met the ear but the melancholy sighing of the night-wind around the old house, with a sound inexpressibly dreary.

Where had that strange music come from ? Not from the inhabited part of the house, for that was to his right. And when the excitement had died away, and he could calmly reflect upon it, he felt positive this had issued from the left wing—the old, half-ruined, deserted, northern part of the building. Of all the strange and unaccountable things that had puzzled him within the last four-and-twenty hours, this seemed the strangest and most unaccountable of all. Again a red, lambent flame shot out from the dying fire, and hovered like a glory around the pictured face on the wall ; and it seemed, to his excited fancy, that there was exultation in the eye, and derision in the smile, as though *she* held the secret and scoffed at his ignorance. Tired out at last with watching, he again lay down and dreamed, undisturbed, of music, and Jacquetta and handsome Spanish boys, and little selfish girls, and old witches twenty feet high, until the first morning sunbeam peeped through the star-curtained oriole window, and fell lovingly and warmly as a mother's kiss on the closed lids of the young Englishman's dark eyes.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE VENDETTA.

“ ‘ Then surely,’ said the lady’s knight,  
On earth I may not be,  
Since never was there mortal wight  
Heard such sweet melody.’ ”

—OLD BALLAD.

THE sun was high in the heavens ere Captain Disbrowe awoke, and, springing up, he leisurely began to dress, ruminating still on the unaccountable incidents of the preceding night. But all his ruminations ended by

leaving him more perplexed than ever; and the face on the wall, at which he glanced at intervals, smiled serenely, and suggested nothing to help him out of his difficulty.

"Upon my soul, I believe have got into an enchanted castle!" he muttered, tying his cravat, critically. "The Castle of Otronto couldn't hold a candle to it, and it beats the 'Mysteries of Udolpho' all to sticks! How remarkably fond of music any one must be who will get out of their comfortable bed in the 'dead waste and middle of the night' to serenade the bats and owls in that old tower, or whatever they call it! Well, every one to their taste; and that reminds me that I should feel obliged to any one who would inform me whether that face is pretty or not—for, upon my word and honor, I can't decide."

So saying, the honorable Alfred left his room; and humming the fag-end of a tune, ran down-stairs, passed through the hall, and out of the front door which lay open to admit the breezy morning air and bright sunshine.

It was a pleasant prospect which met his eye that jocund spring morning. Away out before him spread the broad, winding avenue of shadowy maples just beginning to don their bright spring dress; and, further still lay the road, with a dense, primeval pine forest bounding the view. On either side lay the broad fields and smooth meadows of Fontelle, and away behind stretched out the faint outline of blue, shadowy hills, dying out in the bluer sky. The air was balmy with the faint odor from the pine forest, and rung and resounded with the blithe voices of numberless birds, up and hard at work for the day.

While the young guardsman stood leaning negligently against the vast stuccoed pillars that supported the massive doorway, he heard a footstep behind him, and the next moment Frank appeared, bright and cheery.

"Hallo! Up already?" was his salutation. "Nice morning, ain't it?"

Captain Disbrowe glanced at the bright sky and brighter sun, and not being able, consistently with truth,

to deny the fact, admitted that it was rather a nice morning.

"Beats your English climate slightly—don't it!" said Frank. "Rain, and drizzle, and mud; and then, mud, and drizzle, and rain, by way of a change. Ugh! I wouldn't be paid to live in such a place at any price!"

"Which is England's loss, if she only knew it," said Disbrowe, lazily; "but we have a glimpse of sunshine there occasionally, my young friend—on the king's birthday, and the festival of St. George and the Dragon, and other national feasts; so it's not altogether so overwhelming and knock-down a sight to see the sun as you might suppose. Where are the rest? Everything was so still I thought none of you were up."

"Up!" said Frank, like an echo, "Doesn't Jack always beat the sun, and be up and doing an hour before he has the faintest idea of rousing himself for his day's labor? I guess so! And now she's off over the hills on horseback, and has most likely cleared some dozen miles before this. As for judging by the stillness, this house always goes considerably ahead of the Palace of Silence, or the Dead Sea, or any other mute and solemn old tomb, I flatter myself, in that article."

"Indeed! By the way," said Disbrowe, carelessly, "is all the building inhabited—I mean, do the family occupy the whole of it?"

"Oh, no—not near. That old north wing over there— isn't it dismal-looking?—hasn't been occupied for the last twenty years or more. You see, it was built as near like Fontelle Park as possible, but it wasn't convenient in the old style; and though it suited England well enough, it didn't pay in America. The swallows built their nests in the chimneys, and they smoked like fury, and the roof leaked in wet weather, and the windows were small and dark, and the rooms were large and gloomy, with oak wainscottings; and, altogether, it was a dismal old barn as ever was. So Uncle Rob had the southern wing built; and that, with the right half of this middle part, is all we occupy."

"Ah!" said Disbrowe, thoughtfully, "and you are quite sure—"



"I'm quite sure that's Jack," cut in Frank, suddenly. "There she goes! Ain't she a tip-top rider? Look at that!—now watch her clear that fence!"

A high fence, with a sharp, spiked top, was right in the way of the rider, as she came sweeping down, mounted on a splendid black Arabian—a fence that would have made even the finished rider, Captain Disbrowe, mounted on his superb Saladin, pause; but it stopped not the course of the spirited little equestrian, who came dashing along. Backing her horse for the leap over it, she dashed in splendid style; and then, relaxing into a trot, she ambled up, and, lifting her eyes, saw the two spectators.

"Good-morning, Captain Disbrowe," she said touching her plumed riding-hat gallantly. "Why didn't you get up and take a gallop with me over the hills this bright morning, for the benefit of your health and appetite, instead of lying lazily in bed? Oh, I forgot," she added, with a saucy glance and a light, breezy laugh, as she sprung off, "you're a true-born Englishman, and fond of creature comforts, and taking your ease. Here, William, take my horse."

"Not so fond of either, Miss Jacquetta," he said piqued at her look and tone, "but that I would gladly have given both up for a ride with my charming little cousin, if I had known it in time."

"Well, mind for the future; for I don't intend to take compliments, or any small coins of that sort, in return, for a want of gallantry. I hope you're a pretty good rider, Cousin Alfred, and won't mind risking your neck now and then over the mountains—or else it will never do for you to ride with me."

"Who would not risk his neck, my fairy sprite, for the sake of attending you? Who could wish for a fairer death than meeting it in the service of so bewitching a mountain queen? Ah! wouldn't I risk my neck joyfully, if I thought it would draw one tear from you," said Disbrowe, in a mock-heroic strain.

"Upon my word, then, I don't think it would," said Jacquetta, composedly. "I'm not given to crying much myself, as a general thing, and when I do, it's only for sensible people; and I consider that any one who would

‘risk his neck joyfully,’ just to make one drop a tear, would be, to draw it mild, an unmitigated donkey! Now, there!”

She sprung up beside him as she spoke; and snatching off her hat, began swinging it by the strings. Disbrowe met her bright, saucy, defiant glance, and at last decided that she was pretty. Yes, Jacquetta De Vere was, undeniably, pretty, and looked her very best at that moment. The small, straight, lithe figure was set off to perfection by the close-fitting, dark-blue riding habit; the gray eyes were flashing and sparkling like twin stars; the short, red, silky curls danced and glittered in spiral rings around the white, polished, boyish forehead; the cheeks were like spring roses, and the mirthful glance and mocking smile were the living reality of the picture. Breezy and bright she stood there, every saucy, piquant feature of her piquant little face sparkling with youth, life, beauty and an exultant sense of freedom, reminding him of some half-tamed thing—some shy, wild, fierce young eaglet, dangerous to touch too closely; the least dignified De Vere he had ever seen, perhaps; but certainly the most bewitching. Not a trace of last night’s grave trouble remained; and Disbrowe scarcely knew whether the whole thing was not part of a dream.

“By the way,” said Jacquetta slapping her gaiter with her riding-whip, and giving him a merry glance. “I made a conquest this morning.”

“Well, that is nothing wonderful—is it?” said Disbrowe, “for you, who have only to see to conquer?”

“Ah to be sure! I never thought of that. See what it is to have a long head. But this was something unusual—something to be proud of. Oh! gracious! wasn’t he a darling?”

“What was it?” said Disbrowe. “A grizzly bear, or a catamount, or a man-monkey? I don’t see what else you could very well meet in these savage regions.”

“No, sir,” said Jacquetta, indignantly, “It was the most splendid-looking little foreigner—oh, my! Oh, such eyes, such features, such a superb little form, such dainty hands and feet, such hair!”—and Jacquetta shook her own curly head till its red ringlets glanced again—“and

such a dress! Good gracious! And then the way he doffed his plumed cap and made me such a courtly bow, was a sight to see, not to hear of. Oh, the little darling!" said Jacquetta, going off into a small rapture.

"Why, it must have been the brigandish foreigner I met at the Mermaid Inn," said Disbrowe. "Where did you see him?"

"Taking a stroll over the hills, and I have not the faintest symptom of a heart left ever since," said Jacquetta.

"How I wish I were him!" said Disbrowe, sighing.

"Well, you're not him, you see! Oh! I forgot to ask you how did you rest last night—pretty hostess, ain't I?"

"Very," said Disbrowe, emphatically, and looking unutterable things; but Jacquetta only laughed; "and I rested very well, thank you; but there was rather a singular thing happened about midnight."

"Indeed! what was it?" said Jacquetta, with a start, and fixing her bright eyes full upon him.

"A very pleasant incident, but rather unaccountable—the sound of music, the strangest, sweetest, wildest strains I ever heard, and seemingly issuing from yonder deserted part of the building. What! good-heavens! have I frightened you, my dear cousin? You are fainting."

"No, I am not; it is nothing," she gasped; but, as if by magic, the light had been stricken from her eye, the rose from her cheek, the brightness from her face, and a look, so white, so haggard, so shuddering, came over her, that faint and sick she grasped the pillar for support, and pressed her hand hard on her heart, whose tumultuous throbbing could almost be heard.

So appalling, so terrifying, so instantaneous was the change, that Disbrowe was thunderstruck. Then, as she still stood holding on to the pillar, deathly white, and shivering through all her frame, he caught her in his arms, fearing she would faint and fall.

The action seemed to galvanize her into spasmodic life. With a wild jarring cry, that awoke the echoes, she sprung from his retaining arms, and held out her own blindly, as if to keep him off.

"Off, off!" she cried, passionately. "Touch me not!"

"Why, Jack! Good gracious, Jack! what set you off

in this gale?" said Frank, in astonishment, as he returned after a moment's absence.

"Nothing! Hush!" She grasped Disbrowe's arm with a convulsive pressure, and made a motion for him not to speak. At that instant he saw her face white and terrified; the next, as she turned it to Frank, it was, though pale, perfectly calm and composed. "I wish you would go to the stable, Frank, and see that William attends properly to Lightning. He has had a hard ride this morning, and needs looking after. That's a good boy."

Frank darted off, and Jacquetta's face was averted for a moment, as she gazed after him. When she turned it again to Disbrowe, it was, though slightly pale, cool and composed as ever and as she met his astonished glance she laughed in his face.

"I rather think the case is reversed, and I have frightened you, my good cousin. Why, Captain Disbrowe, I would not have Frank hear the story of that ghostly music for any earthly consideration. It would be all over the country in a jiffy, that the house is haunted. Are you quite sure you were not dreaming, cousin Alf?"

"Quite," said Disbrowe, brusquely.

"Ah! Well, it may have been an Æolian harp, or something—most likely it was. And then the wind blew pretty hard last night. Or it may have been cats—our Thomas is musically given, and entertains a select party of friends every night in the corridors of the north wing. Are you sure it was not the cats, cousin?" said Jacquetta, cutting the air with her whip, and again laughing.

"Perfectly sure, Miss Jacquetta. Neither my hearing nor my eyesight deceive me often," he replied pointedly.

"Oh! don't they? You are wider awake, then, than the generality of your countrymen. Perhaps there are ghosts there, then, and you heard the music of the Dance of Death. Ugh! it's enough to give one the horrors to think of it! This comes of building houses in the old English style, instead of any decent Christian fashion. I always heard that ghosts and rats were particularly fond of old houses; but I never knew of my own knowledge before. It's lucky you told me, instead of any weakminded person with a belief in the supernatural. Be sure you



don't mention it to any one else—above all, to uncle or Frank !”

The last words were accompanied by a brief, bright flash of her eye, that said, as plain as words : “ If you do tell, it won't be well for you.” Captain Disbrowe understood it, and replied by a slight bow and slighter smile ; and then said, to turn the conversation, which annoyed him somehow, though he could scarcely tell why :

“ How is Miss Augusta this morning ? ”

“ Better, I believe. I am going to see her now, and *au revoir* till breakfast-time.” And humming a Venetian barcarole, and still swinging her jaunty riding-hat by the strings, she tripped lightly away.

Disbrowe stood and watched the light, small, fairy figure until it disappeared, more thoroughly puzzled than he had ever been before in his life.

“ Strange inexplicable girl ! ” he mused ; “ who can understand her ? She is an enigma, a riddle, a puzzle, a Gordian knot of tangles and inconsistencies. I wonder if it would be worth the time and trouble unraveling said knot, or if it would be altogether safe ? ”

The same curious smile that had dawned on his face the night before, while watching her picture, broke over it again, and once more he began whistling the air, of “ Hear me, Norma,” as on that occasion, with the look of one who would give himself a reminder.

To the surprise of Disbrowe, Lady Augusta appeared at breakfast ; and save that her face was cold and lifeless as marble, and her eyes had a dead, fixed settled look of hopeless despair, no trace remained of the preceding evening's terrible agitation. Mr. De Vere looked pale, and grave, and troubled ; but Jacquetta appeared, though a little subdued, in excellent spirits, and kept up an unflagging flow of words.

After breakfast, accompanied by Mr. De Vere, he went over the grounds, admired the scenery and the houses, though inwardly chafing at the occupation, when he would much rather have been in the parlor with Jacquetta. But he was not doomed to see much of that young lady that day ; for, immediately after dinner, Frank informed him that she had ridden off somewhere .

alone, to visit a sick widow who lived in a cottage among the hills. And he furthermore learned that Miss Jacquetta had quite a long list of *protégés* of one kind and another, from ill-used dogs up to (with reverence be it said) sick widows and friendless orphans.

For some cause or another, the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe felt extremely dissatisfied about something. This was a pretty way to entertain him after coming all the way from England, riding off and leaving him alone, as if he was of no more consequence than William, the hostler. He felt irritated and chagrined; and if the truth must be told, his vanity was more than slightly wounded by her high, supreme indifference to the handsome lady-killer who hitherto had found himself so irresistible.

Having worked himself into a pretty severe state of misanthropy, he took advantage of a short absence on the part of Frank, and resolved to have a ride over the hills on his own account. There was a remote possibility—judging from all he had heard—that he might break his neck; but in his present humor the idea rather pleased him than otherwise, as it would leave Jacquetta a victim to remorse and black bombazine all the rest of her days; so off he rode, half-hoping he might meet with some direful accident that would awaken that flinty-hearted piece of femininity to the error of her ways.

Gradually, as he rode on, he fell into deep thought, and suffered his horse to go as he pleased. The events of the last few days gave him enough to think about; but in all his dreams and cogitations, the image of Jacquetta ever rose uppermost, haunting him like a waking nightmare. Sometimes he saw the little face in its clustering red curls; and the more he thought of her red hair, the more he detested it—mocking, taunting, sparkling, defiant; sometimes he saw it pale, grave and troubled; and now he beheld it white, shuddering, and wild as when he had told her of the mysterious music. But in whatever mood, it was the same face, framed in red hair, and it blotted out everything else.

Suddenly he was aroused from his dreams and visions, in a startling way. A hand clutched his bridle-rein, and

the cold muzzle of a pistol pointed directly at his head. He looked up, as well he might, and found himself in a lonely valley, lying between two high hills—a wild desolate-looking spot, without a single human habitation, save one little hut on the brow of the furthest hill. The man who clutched his bridle-rein was Captain Nick Tempest and his upturned face was the face of a demon.

“So we have met again, my young friend,” said the captain. “And this time I may show you the way—mayn’t I? And by the Lord Harry! I will, too, show you the way to the infernal region in double quick time!”

The young Englishman was unarmed, and the full danger of his situation rushed upon him at once. Alone in this lonely place, unarmed and in the power of this savage cutthroat, whom he had made his mortal enemy! Yet it only had the effect of doing, what it did once before, making his face set and stern and his nerves like steel.

“Do you know what the Corsican *vendetta* means, my haughty English friend?” said the captain with a diabolical sneer. “If you do, then learn that no Corsican ever vowed a more deadly *vendetta* than did I when you struck me, or will keep it in a more deadly way. Look at that!”—he almost shrieked, while his face grew livid and distorted with passion as he pointed to a raw, red, quivering cut across his face—“that is your handiwork, and if I was dying and could win heaven by doing it, I would never forgive you! Never! by—” And he uttered a fearful oath.

“I haven’t asked you to,” said Disbrowe, meeting his ferocious glare steadily.

“No!” he shouted; “for it would be useless! Out of this you will never stir alive! You are here; beyond all human help, completely in my power, and your doom is sealed!”

He raised the pistol as he spoke, but dropped it again at a sound that startled both him and the young Englishman, and both turned to behold an unlooked-for apparition.

## CHAPTER IX.

JACINTO.

“By night the heavy doors are drawn,  
The castle stands alone;  
But in the chambers, till the dawn,  
Unquiet spirits move.”

It was a wild cry—a woman’s shrill shriek, that had startled them; but looking round, they saw no woman—only the Spanish boy, Jacinto, who came flying toward them, uttering cry after cry, as no boy ever did before. It was an apparition so unlooked-for, so unexpected, that both forgot, for an instant, what was to follow—the one, his imminent danger, and other, his demoniac vengeance; and before either had recovered, the boy was standing beside Disbrowe, holding out his arms, before him, as if he would have interposed that frail barrier to shield his life.

“Spare him—spare him!” cried the boy, in piercing accents. “Oh, Captain Tempest! for the love of Heaven, spare his life!”

The young Englishman, taking advantage of the momentary confusion, made an attempt to wrest the pistol from his enemy’s grasp; but the hawk-like eye of Captain Tempest detected the motion, and quick as lightning he sprung back, took deliberate aim, and fired.

With a mighty shriek of more than mortal anguish, Jacinto had flung his arms around the young guardsman; and with the momentary start the cry gave the ruffian, the ball sped from its aim, and the next instant the right arm of the young Spaniard dropped lifeless by his side, and with a groan he sunk senseless on the ground.

“Villain! demon!” shouted the young man, maddened by the sight. “You have killed him!” And in an instant he had sprung off his horse, and grasped Captain Nick by the throat ere he could draw a second pistol from his belt.

With a fearful oath of mingled rage and disappointment at missing his aim, the captain closed with his adversary, and a deadly struggle ensued. It was a struggle that



would not have lasted long, for—though Disbrowe had the advantage of youth and agility—Captain Tempest was a perfect giant in strength, and he had grasped the young man in an iron grasp with one hand, while with the other he tugged at a huge, glistening knife, when he unexpectedly found himself seized from behind by some huge monster, that held him as if he was in a vise, and obliged him to relax his hold.

“Hold him, Lion! hold him, my boy!” exclaimed a spirited voice, at the same moment. “That’s a good dog! Now, then—what’s all this about?”

Disbrowe looked up, and saw, to his astonishment, no other than Miss Jacquetta De Vere sitting on her horse, and looking on the scene as coolly and composedly as though it was a little tableau got up for her express amusement. Her horse’s hoofs on the soft turf had been noiseless; so they had not heard her approach. Stepping back, Disbrowe took off his hat, and shook back his clustering hair off his flushed face, and glanced around before speaking. Saladin stood snorting and pawing the ground with terror, at a little distance; Jacinto lay on his face senseless at his feet, his coat-sleeve saturated with blood; and Captain Nick Tempest, foaming at the mouth, was struggling furiously in the grasp of a huge, fierce-looking dog—who, with one eye on his mistress, was evidently grimly resolved to hold him while he had a tooth in his head.

“Well,” said Jacquetta, after a pause, during which her eye had followed Disbrowe’s, “you’ve been getting yourself into a scrape, I see, my good cousin. You should not have ridden out, you perceive, until I was ready to go along and take care of you. Gussie, easy, my dear sir”—to Captain Nick Tempest, who was writhing and cursing at an awful rate—“don’t swear so, and don’t struggle in that way; for if the broadcloth gives way, perhaps you won’t find Lion’s teeth very comfortable, and perhaps I shan’t be able to keep him from cheating the hangman, and perhaps I won’t try, either! What is the matter, cousin Alfred, and who is this lying on the ground? Why, he’s wounded! Good heavens! has he been shot?”

She leaped off her horse as she spoke, and bent over Jacinto, as Disbrowe knelt down and raised him in his arms. The beautiful face was cold and still as marble, and the lips were blanched to a deadly whiteness. The wounded arm hung heavy and lifeless by his side, and his head fell over Disbrowe's arm as though he were in reality dead.

"Oh, cousin! is he dead?" cried Jacquetta, falling on her knees beside him.

"Not dead," said Disbrowe, laying his hand on his heart, which still fluttered faintly; "not dead, but in a swoon; and his arm is shattered, I greatly fear."

"Oh, poor boy—poor boy!" said Jacquetta, sorrowfully. "Oh, cousin! who had the heart to do this?"

"That monster there! May Heaven's worst curses light on him!" exclaimed Disbrowe, fiercely. "Where can we bring him, Jacquetta? Something must be done immediately."

"Bring him to Fontelle—there is no other place where he can be brought, and it is not more than two miles from this. Lift him before you on your horse, and ride fast. But, tell me how it happened. Did this man intend murdering him?"

"No—no. He intended to murder me; and this poor boy, in his effort to save my life, received the ball meant for me," said Disbrowe, as he raised the almost lifeless and limber form in his arms.

"What a beautiful face!" exclaimed Jacquetta, involuntarily—forgetting, for an instant, everything but the wondrous beauty of the lad.

As she spoke, the boy opened his eyes, and they fell upon the handsome, troubled face bending over him, and, with a faint exclamation, he attempted to rise; but at the motion a spasm of intense pain shot across his pale face, and shuddering through all his frame, his head dropped heavily on Disbrowe's breast.

"My poor boy!" said Disbrowe, compassionately, "do not attempt to rise. Your arm is broken, I fear; but I will take you where you will be carefully nursed."

"No. Let me go; put me down—I must go," said the boy, wildly, making another attempt to free himself; but

his voice was faint and sharp with agony, and his face twitched convulsively with the almost unendurable pain, and once more he sunk back, white and fainting.

Disbrowe's only reply was to place him upon his horse, and then leap into the saddle; while, with a groan that all his efforts could not repress, the poor boy's head dropped heavily on his shoulder.

"What is to be done with this scoundrel who assaulted you?" said Jacquetta. "Shall I order Lion to keep him here till we can return with men to arrest him? Eh?"

Captain Tempest's reply to this proposition was an appalling volley of oaths, as his livid face grew a shade more ghostly, and he shook his clenched fist furiously at Jacquetta in impotent passion.

"No, let him go; let Captain Tempest go," said Jacinto, faintly, lifting his head for an instant, and then dropping it again.

"Let him go, since the lad desires it," said Disbrowe, after a moment's hesitation. "I shall be on my guard for the future, and will not be taken at a disadvantage again."

"Very well," said Jacquetta, as she fearlessly approached the raving savage; "but first, my dear sir, I will trouble you for that pistol. Before Lion lets you off the limits, you must stand and deliver."

Captain Nick furiously hurled the pistol at her feet.

"Thank you," said Jacquetta, coolly, as she picked up the weapon and examined it. "Loaded, I see—all right! Here, Lion—here, my boy; let him go!"

With a sullen growl like his angry namesake, that showed how much against his better judgment he complied, Lion obeyed, and trotted over to the side of his young mistress, still displaying a formidable array of teeth.

"Now, be off at once," shouted Jacquetta, in a high, ringing tone of command, as she raised the pistol and kept her bright eye fixed on the outwitted captain. "Vanish, before I am tempted to give you a dose of cold lead, which I would just as lief do, only I don't want to rob the gallows of its due. Be off!"

Gnashing his teeth with impotent passion, the captain obeyed—not knowing how soon the dangerous-looking little desperado might be tempted to fire ; and a mocking laugh from Jacquetta came wafted after him on the evening breeze, and was the last sound he heard, as he vanished round the brow of the hill.

“ The youth has fainted again,” said Disbrowe, anxiously, as Jacquetta, whistling to Lion, stuck the pistol in a belt she wore, and vaulted lightly on her horse.

“ So much the better,” said Jacquetta. “ You can ride rapidly now without fear of hurting him—poor fellow ! Come, *en avant !* ”

Both spirited horses darted off simultaneously, and in less than fifteen minutes the peaked gables and quaint turrets of Fontelle came in sight.

“ Don’t alarm the house, but bring him up here,” said Jacquetta, as she entered the hall, followed by Disbrowe carrying his insensible burden, “ into the room next mine—in here.”

She led the way down the long hall, up a flight of stairs, and through another hall leading to the south wing of the building ; and throwing open a door, ushered Disbrowe into a pleasant little room, elegantly furnished in tasteful, modern style.

Disbrowe laid Jacinto on a low French bed, hung with white, scarcely whiter now than his death-like face. Again, as he looked at him, that same unaccountable conviction that he had seen him somewhere before, flashed across his mind.

But Jacquetta, with her usual energetic promptitude, left him little time to ruminate, for no sooner had he laid him down, than she said :

“ There ! go now and hunt up Frank, and send him off to Green Creek for a doctor. Tell him to be quick, for the sooner this arm is set, the better. Go ! ”

In spite of himself, Disbrowe could not repress a smile at the young lady’s prompt, off-hand, decided way of doing business, but without waiting even to reply, he darted off, leaving Jack De Vere alone with her patient.

He found Frank yawning dreamily over a novel in the parlor ; and in a few words told him what had happened,



and dispatched him for a physician. Frank's astonishment was unbounded, but he took pains to repress it, and beyond the ejaculation "Whew!" jerked out of him by the exigency of the case, he said nothing, but clapping his hat on his head, disappeared instant.

Just as Disbrowe was about to return to the room where he had left Jacinto and his pretty, spirited little nurse, Mr. De Vere came along the hall, and to the great chagrin of his dutiful nephew, called him off to see some improvements he was about to make in the grounds. He made desperate efforts to listen to the questions asked him by his uncle, but answered so much at random, that Mr. De Vere pushed up his spectacles, and looked at him, to see if he had taken leave of his senses. In a few moments the clatter of horses' hoofs, coming up the avenue in front, warned him that Frank was returning, and Disbrowe, unable to remain longer, abruptly turned and walked off, to the utter amazement of Mr. De Vere.

Frank was not alone ; a little paunchy old gentleman, with a bald head and a jolly face, accompanied him, whom Frank introduced as Doctor Simonds.

"Bad case this broken arm," said the little doctor, rubbing his hands joyfully, "rather unpleasant thing. Go ahead, my son, and show me the way. Have a pinch, sir?" said the little man, taking a huge pinch of snuff himself, and handing the box to Disbrowe.

"No, thank you," said Disbrowe, politely. "I'll guide you, doctor."

"How did this mishap occur?" said the doctor. "Frank couldn't tell me."

"An accident," said Disbrowe, briefly, as he knocked at the door.

It was opened by Jacquetta, looking strangely pale and agitated.

"Oh, walk in, Doctor Simonds," she said, hurriedly ; "but you must not enter, Captain Disbrowe, at least, not yet."

"I may want some one to help me," said the doctor.

"Then I will help you," she said, still keeping her hand on Disbrowe's arm, as if to keep him out. "My dear cousin, oblige me by not coming in just at present."

Disbrowe bowed, and walked off, scarcely knowing whether to be irritated or not at this cavalier mode of treatment. He flung himself into a chair in the front hall, and determined to remain there and waylay the doctor as he came out, and learn from him at least something concerning the patient. Gradually, as he thought of her brusque, independent ways and tones, and cool, determined manner, a smile broke over his handsome face; and he could not help owning that this resolute, careless independence, and the easy grace with which she invested it, became her wonderfully well, as nothing else could have done.

"What a queen she would make!" he thought, as he leaned his head on his hand, and fell into thought. "She would be a second Elizabeth, in all but the cruelty. What a girl it is, to be sure! I wish she were a duchess; I would then be tempted to fall in love with her! If she hadn't red hair—ah, there's the rub! as Hamlet says. I detest red hair, yet it is not absolutely hideous in her; it is soft and glossy as floss silk, and would be beautiful only for the confounded color. I wonder what Earnecliffe and Lady Margaret would think of her. By Jove! how she would horrify her ladyship." And Disbrowe laughed at the thought.

"A penny for your thoughts, monsieur," said a musical voice at his elbow, and looking up he saw Jacquetta herself, with her piercing eyes fixed on his face, and the strangest smile on her lips. "Are they worth it?"

"Yes, *ma belle*, for they were of—you!"

"Oh, then they must have been invaluable! But I tell you what, cousin Alf," said the young lady adjusting her bracelet, and then holding out her arm to look at the effect, "it's all a waste of ammunition thinking of me, and I wouldn't advise you to continue it. Why don't you ask about our handsome patient?"

"I fancied perhaps his exacting nurse would not allow it," said Disbrowe, in a tone of slight pique.

"Oh, I don't mind your inquiring after him, as long as you *only* do that," said Jacquetta, smiling provokingly; "so I will relieve your mind at once, by saying his arm is safely set and Doctor Simonds says he will do nicely."

"Where is the doctor?"

"I let him out by a side-door, for I knew you wanted to lay violent hands on him, and would drive the worthy little soul to the verge of distraction with all your questions."

"How very thoughtful of you! Well, can I see your patient?"

"Most certainly not! I wonder at your asking such a question, cousin Alfred," said Jacquetta, arching her eyebrows, and giving her bracelet another twist.

"But I want to thank him for saving my life."

"Well, so you can, when he gets better. The doctor commands quiet for him."

"When can I see him then?"

"Well, I'll think about it, and it may be soon, and then again, it mightn't, as old Rowlie of the Mermaid says. You must have patience, my dear cousin."

"And what will he think of me," said Disbrowe, pacing up and down vehemently, "after saving my life, if I do not even give him the poor reward of thanks. I tell you I must see him!"

"Patience, cousin Alfred! it's a beautiful virtue, and I would recommend it to you while you are young and—innocent!" said Jacquetta, after a pause, drawing down the corners of her rosy mouth.

Disbrowe snatched up his hat, in a fit of angry impatience, and was about to leave her when Jacquetta laughingly caught him, and held him back.

"There now! Don't be vexed. Where's the use of getting cross," she said, in a soothing tone, as if speaking to a spoiled child. "I give you my word of honor, as a lady and a De Vere, that you will see him as soon as it is prudent, and you may then go down on your knees, and thank him till all's blue. Meantime, I'll faithfully report to him the terrific pitch of gratitude you've worked yourself up to. There's my hand on it! And now sit down and behave yourself! That pleasant-spoken gentleman who tried to send you to a better world is Captain Nick Tempest—is it not? 'Old Nick,' as they call him?"

"Yes," said Disbrowe, taking a seat beside her.

"Well, who do you think he reminded me of?"

"Can't say—but I know who he reminds me of. He reminds me of—myself!"

"By Jove! my idea to a fraction," said Disbrowe, delightedly, "not that you look alike, but somehow—"

"Yes, but we do look alike, though—I'm certain of it—except that I'm rather better looking, I flatter myself. Haven't we got hair alike, now?"

"Oh! but his is red," said Disbrowe, hesitatingly, "and yours—"

"Is red, too," said Jacquetta.

"Indeed! I thought it was auburn—beautiful auburn," said Disbrowe, in the lazy tone in which he was accustomed to issue little works of fiction.

"Oh, you did—did you?" said Jacquetta; "but then you're only an Englishman, and can't be expected to see till it's far in the day, and then you're not half wide-awake. Why, I wouldn't have my hair any other color, on any account. It's a good, high-minded, spirited color, and shows people have a decided will of their own; and then it's nice and showy—none of your dismal blacks, nor fady, sickly yellow, nor neutral browns. No, sir, my hair's red, and I'm proud of it!" said Jacquetta, shaking her flashing curls from her eyes.

"Well, one thing is certain," said Disbrowe, "you are the first De Vere that ever had red hair, within the memory of man."

"And that's another reason why I'm proud of it. It's time there was a change in the family—they have been going on in the old way long enough, goodness knows! The followers of the Silver Star have been keeping up their obsolete notions long enough, and need a little variety."

"And a more bewitching variety they could not have than Miss Jacquetta De Vere," said Disbrowe, softly.

"Humph!" said Jacquetta, with a peculiar smile. "Let's change the subject. Are you fond of singing, cousin Alfred? I wish you would sing 'Hear me, Norma.' It is a pretty song."

He half sprung from his seat, and fixed his eyes on her, as if he would read her very heart. She met his gaze unflinchingly, and again her laughing gray eyes reminded



him of the picture, there was such an immeasurable depth of mockery shining through, and baffling him.

"I heard you whistling it yesterday," she said, carelessly, "and as it is a favorite of mine, I thought perhaps you might favor me now."

"No, I never sing," he said, half-curtly, as he arose again, and began walking up and down.

"Well, I must leave you, then, and return to my patient," she said, rising. "I will see you at the tea-table, and report progress." And, with a smiling wave of her hand, she was gone.

Disbrowe paced up and down the long hall, in deep thought, until the bell rung for the evening meal. There was a half-puzzled, half-angry look on his face; yet now and then, as if in spite of him, his features would relax into a smile, and his last words were, as he turned to join the family: "It's of no use; I cannot read the riddle."

"I have a message for you, cousin," said Jacquetta, in a low voice, approaching him when the supper was over.

"Well—I am all attention," said Disbrowe.

"It is from him—you know. He says not to distress yourself over-much with gratitude, as he merely acted as he would have done for any one; and as for your thanks, they will keep, and, like gooseberry wine, be all the better for keeping. So make yourself easy, cousin mine."

"I intend to," said Disbrowe, throwing himself into a chair. "Capital advice, that, and I intend to follow it. Do you know, when I marry I expect to repose on a couch of rose leaves all day long, and make my wife fan me and sing—"

"Hear me, Norma!" broke in Jacquetta, with a wicked laugh; and Disbrowe colored, and instantly grew silent.

That evening he heard Jacquetta sing for the first time, and a superb voice she had. Augusta, too, swept over the keys of the piano with a master hand, at her father's desire; but an automaton would have done it with as much life. If she had been made of marble she could not have sat more white, and cold, and still than she sat before them there.

Later that evening, Jacquetta sung an old English

ballad, at the earnest solicitation of Disbrowe—an old song, with a sweet, plaintive air—and, lying lazily back, he watched her with half-closed eyes, and listened to the words :

“ And when the Christmas tale goes round,  
By many a peat fireside,  
The children list and shrink to hear  
How Childe of Phymstoke died.”

And then the song goes on to say how the “ Old Tor ” went a hunting, and how he lost his way on the moor, and of his despair :

“ For far and wide the highland lay  
One pathless waste of snow.  
He paused—the angry heavens above,  
The faithless bog below.

“ He paused, and soon through all his veins  
Life’s current feebly ran ;  
And heavily a mortal sleep  
Came o’er the dying man.

“ Yet one dear wish, one tender thought  
Came o’er that hunter brave—”

Jacquetta paused, and rose with a laugh.

“ Well, that’s very pretty ! Why don’t you go on, and let us know what that ‘tender thought’ was ? ” said Disbrowe.

“ I was just thinking of your getting lost,” she replied, “and was afraid you might think the song personal ; besides, you have heard enough of old songs, without me singing them to you.”

“ There are no songs like them,” said Disbrowe. “ I would rather hear one old ballad than all the Italian songs that ever a *prima donna* trilled and quavered.”

“ You think too much of old things,” said Jacquetta, half-pettishly. “ Old names, and families, and old houses, and old songs, all alike. For my part, I believe in modern improvements and new sensations altogether.”

“ And yet I am certain you would rather bear the old name of De Vere than any other under the sun,” said Disbrowe.

With a gesture that was almost fierce in its passionate

impatience, Jacquetta arose and moved to the other side of the room.

"You are a De Vere, my dear boy, if there ever was one," said his uncle, with a smile, "and will marry a countess, I'll be bound!"

"I don't believe there is a countess living I would marry," said Disbrowe, carelessly.

"And why not, pray? A duchess, then," laughed Mr. De Vere.

"Nor a duchess—unless I was in love with her, and she would have me."

"Two very important considerations," said his uncle. "Then you mean to marry for love?"

"I hope so—if I ever do come to that."

"It's an old-fashioned notion! Is that the reason?" said Jacquetta, with a curling lip.

"Partly. If ever I see a woman, my equal in every way, and we happen to love one another in a decent, quiet gentlemanly and lady-like sort of fashion, it is probable we will get married, as well as the rest of the world."

"What a fortunate woman she will be!" said Jacquetta, sarcastically. "Have you ever seen her yet, Captain Disbrowe?"

"Can't say, positively," he said carelessly. "I may, and then again I mayn't, to quote the authority you mentioned some time ago."

"Rather an unsatisfactory answer," said Mr. De Vere. "Now, suppose, my dear Alfred, you fell in love with a girl—handsome, accomplished and lady-like—and the daughter of a peddler, or tailor, and that she loved you—would you marry her?"

"No, sir!" said Disbrowe—and his fine face looked cold and proud in the clear light—"no, sir; I never would!"

"Simply because she was not your equal in birth?"

"Yes—for that reason alone, even if I did not fear the the scoffs and jeers of the world, or the just indignation of Earnecliffe, the proudest peer in England. No, sir," said the young man, resuming his customary careless tone; "I never would marry any one below me in birth, for any consideration."

"Oh, bother your loftiness!" muttered Frank, indignantly. "I wish you had been born in a barn!"

Jacquetta arose, suddenly, and, with a fierce, flashing fire in her eyes, lifted up one arm as if to speak, but a cold, white hand was laid beseechingly on it, and the marble-like face of Lady Augusta interposed:

"Not now, Jacquetta! Oh, Jacquetta, dearest, not now!"

Jacquetta stooped and kissed her, with a softening brow; but the fire was in her eye, and a hot, crimson spot on either cheek, as, with the tread and step of an empress, she passed from the room.

Disbrowe sat confounded. What had he said?—what had he done? A sudden gravity had fallen on all. Augusta sat like a figure of ice, Mr. De Vere looked serious and Frank was scowling indignantly at him from under his brows.

"My dear uncle," he said, after a pause, "I hope I have not offended Miss De Vere. I most certainly had not the remotest intentions of doing so, and am yet ignorant of my fault; for assuredly, nothing I said can, in the most distant way, apply to her—my equal in every sense of the word."

"You forgot you will be a peer of the realm one of these days, when the present Lord Earnecliffe kicks the bucket," sneered Frank, "and she will only be Jack De Vere, and 'our American cousin,' and a poor relation."

"Silence, sir!" said Mr. De Vere, sternly, as Disbrowe's face flushed indignant scarlet. "Do not mind Frank, my dear boy—he has caught Jacquetta's fashion of saying whatever he pleases, and consequently thinks a little too loud sometimes."

"A fashion, it seems, no one else is to have," thought Disbrowe. Then, aloud: "And is it really possible my cousin is so red-hot a republican as to be offended at my thoughtless words? I imagined she would have sympathized with me."

"Jacquetta does not believe in true merit being overlooked, because it happened to be born in a hovel; and she has a quick temper, and takes no pains to conceal her feelings on any subject," said Mr. De Vere. "But, as



for her momentary irritation, she will quickly get over that, and meet you to-morrow as blithely as ever. One thing, though, I wish you would remember," added the speaker, with a slight smile : " Avoid this subject in her presence. It is like applying a match to a powder-magazine. Augusta, my love, you are not looking well—perhaps you had better retire."

Augusta arose in her slow, lifeless way, and, with a slight bend of the head, left the room, followed by Frank. And the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe, dissatisfied with himself and Jacquetta, soon after did the same thing, and felt inclined to wish Miss Jacquetta was like her picture, and that the same old smiling look would never change.

" It is such a vulgar thing to see a young girl in a passion ! Vulgar—revolting—hideous !" he said, testily, " and for nothing, too ! I believe, in my soul, the girl is not a De Vere at all. Got changed in the cradle, or something ; only I'm perfectly sure, as it happens, that neither Uncle Robert, nor my lady cousin Augusta, are the sort of folks who believe in adopting other people's children. To be sure, there is that flippant Frank ; but then he is one of the family, and has the De Vere face, slightly modified with that of Stubbs—bless the mark !—but Miss Jacquetta—rightly named *Jack*—has not a single iota of resemblance to any De Vere I ever saw. She is an original—a little flash of lightning in gaiters—a snapdragon—a little flame of fire, remarkably apt to burn the fingers of any one who attempts to handle her. Well, peace to her memory ! I must go to sleep."

But Captain Disbrowe did not fall asleep as soon as he thought, but lay awake, tossing restlessly, looking at the picture, thinking of Jacquetta, of his evening's adventure, and of last night's mysterious music. Would it be repeated to-night ? He half-hoped it might, for never did mortal listen to such delicious strains as had then greeted his ear.

He slept at last, and, sleeping, he dreamed. Again he was in the lonesome gorge between the hills, and again Captain Nick Tempest and Jacquetta were there. Gradually the air became filled with softest, sweetest melody—from what quarter no man could tell ; and, as it rose and fell in ravishing cadences, he saw, and saw without

surprise, too (he remembered *that* when he awoke), the fair face and graceful form of Jacquetta undergo a frightful transformation. She dropped on her hands, long, black hair waving around her, and, in a moment, she stood changed into the *dog Lion*! And, at the same instant, Captain Nick Tempest was transformed into the image of a lovely lady; and stretching out his arms, with a great cry of "Norma!" he awoke—awoke to find it not all a dream! The night was far advanced, and the air was filled, as in his dream, with divine music. Such celestial harmony, that it held him entranced, spellbound, charmed beyond the power of motion, for a time. Then, as it changed and broke into wild, weird quivering strains, like cries of pain from human lips, he sprung out of bed, dressed rapidly, and, with a desperate impulse upon him to find out whence it came, he descended the stairs and crossed the hall.

The massive hall door was locked, but the key was inside; and turning it, he stood the next instant, alone in the solemn beauty of the silent night. There was a faint young moon that shone in the sky like a broken ring of silver, and by its light, and by that of the high, bright, solemn stars, he rapidly took his way toward the deserted north wing of the building.

A dark, gloomy, dismal pile it looked, as if it were, in very truth, as poor Hood has since sung:

"Under some prodigious ban  
Of excommunication."

The old English ivy grew thick and rank around the narrow windows, wrapping it, even when the sun shone, in funeral gloom. All was dark and lonely there, but the strains of music were close at hand, and there no longer remained a doubt but that it came from the interior.

Suddenly, while he watched, a faint, trembling ray of light passed one of the windows. A sudden suspicion shot through his mind of burglars and housebreakers, and a sort of conviction that Captain Tempest or old Grizzle was in there, flashed upon him. In a twinkling, he had grasped a stout ivy stalk, and holding on to the projecting sill, held himself up and looked in.

It was a female carrying a lamp ; but was it Grizzle Howlet ? Yes—if she had a small, light, fairy figure ; a fleet, noiseless footstep, a small, delicate face, and waving, curling hair ; if she ever wore a dainty, white wrapper, and had a small, snowy hand, sparkling with rich rings. For one instant, the light of the lamp flashed full on the face of her who bore it, and never fell mortal eye on a face so white, so rigid, with such wild, glistening eyes, and hurried, terrified look.

She passed on—all was darkness again ; but the instant she disappeared, the music ceased. He held on until his hands were tired ; and then he sprung down and paced up and down restlessly, waiting for the reappearance of that light, till the stars died, one by one, out of the sky, and the chill gray dawn came blue and cold over the distant hills ; and still it appeared not. And then he re-entered the house, returned to his bedroom, and threw himself, cold and chilled, in bed—not to sleep, but to wonder what this midnight visit meant. From its place above him, the pictured face smiled upon him still, but with a meaning in its mockery he had never felt before, and with—oh ! such a world of derision in its laughing eyes ! Sleeping or waking, would he ever forget the look that white face wore ?—that look of mingled horror, loathing, and repulsion, that made it, despite its young beauty, ghastly to look upon—that look on the face of—Jacquetta De Vere !

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## CHAPTER X.

### A MYSTERY.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,  
 This agony returns ;  
 And till my ghastly tale is told,  
 This heart within me burns."

YE ANCIENT MARINER.

ALL the next day, Jacquetta did not make her appearance ; she was in the room with their wounded guest, and had her meals brought up. Mr. De Vere and Augusta had not been told of Disbrowe's adventure with Captain Tempest, and they simply knew that a young stranger

had broken his arm, and had been brought to Fontelle by Jacquetta, and that she had constituted herself his nurse. Once, Mr. De Vere had paid a visit to the sick-room, and had returned to tell Disbrowe he found him sitting up talking to Jacquetta, and to marvel at his singular and extraordinary beauty, which was the first thing to strike a beholder, always, on seeing Jacinto. Disbrowe's lip curled as his uncle spoke of the tender care and undeny-ing attention of his daughter to the Spanish boy.

"I wonder, if this young stranger were humpbacked and pock-marked, if Miss Jacquetta would be so devoted? I wonder how much his handsome face has to do with all this tender watching and affectionate care?" he said, inwardly. "Take care, Miss Jacquetta! Young ladies have fallen in love with young strangers before now, and with less handsome ones than this dark-eyed lad, too, I'll swear! I wonder if the girl ever was in love?" he thought, as he took up a book to while away the tedious hours.

It was the longest day that he ever remembered in his life. He tried to read, and pitched the book from him in disgust; he played chess with his uncle, yawned in his face, and lost every game. Augusta played for him, but when she was done he could not, to save his life, have told whether it was "Old Hundred" or an overture from "Il Trovatore;" and the only thing he could find to divert his attention for a moment was a portfolio of drawings, by Jacquetta. They were like herself—bold, free, and spirited, and sketched with a dashing hand. Wild scenes they were, too; dismal mountain-gorges yawning darkly between frowning hills, with a lowering sky above, and fuzzy grass below; glimpses of a troubled, glassy, heaving sea, the black sky frowning on the blacker waters, and on a single lone rock that reared its white, ghastly head far out, a wild, ravenous-looking vulture perched, with fierce, flaming eyes, and blood-tinted beak. There was a ship going down, and the blanched faces of drowning men flashed above the inky ocean, their wild eyes glaring in the death-agony, their faces frightfully convulsed, until Disbrowe turned away and replaced them with a shudder, half-expecting to hear their repressed



shrieks burst from their quivering lips. Storms of lightning and thunder on the mountains, and purple, livid moon; gibbering ghosts in long winding-sheets, rising from yawning graves—all that was dismal, and weird, and unearthly, was there, and all bearing tokens of a skilful hand.

“ Ugh ! ” said Disbrowe, replacing them hastily, “ it’s enough to give me the nightmare for a month to look at those ghastly, weird things. Upon my honor, I believe that girl is uncanny, as the Scotch say ; no reasonable Christian, unless suffering agonies of remorse or dyspepsia, could ever fancy such goblin sights. How well she does it, too ! What doesn’t she do well, though ? She rides like an Amazon ; she plays and sings like an Italian *prima donna* ; she draws like Salvator Rosa ; she nurses like—like herself ; and she loves and hates—well, I can’t say about that, but I should think she could do both in stunning fashion. I shall begin to feel half-afraid of the witch, she is so clever. Heigho ! this is an awful slow piece of business, loitering about here. I have a good mind to break my arm, and see if she would nurse me like this. Ten to one she would never come near me, but leave me to the tender mercies of that frigid iceberg, Lady Augusta ; for she’s as full of streaks as a tulip.” And yawning drearily, he sauntered off.

Toward evening, he rode out with Frank for a couple of hours, admired the scenery, took a random shot or two at a bird, and returned to tea, hoping and wishing that he might see Jacquetta. But Jacquetta did not appear ; and, more disappointed than he would have been willing to acknowledge, he retired, at last. He feared he had angered her, and he wanted a reconciliation. He wondered how she would meet him next ; whether with her piquant, saucy smile, or with fiery eyes and burning cheeks, as he had seen her last. But he could not answer the question ; for never was an April day half so fickle as she.

That night he lay awake listening and hoping for a repetition of the mysterious music ; but he listened and hoped in vain. The silence was undisturbed and unbroken all night long.

“ I wonder if I will see her to-day ? ” was his first

thought on awakening; and then he laughed at himself for the restless anxiety he felt for her return. "*Certes*, Alfred Disbrowe! Take care this red-haired damsel does not captivate you, after all! What is she to you that you should care whether you ever see her again or not? What can she ever be to you more than she is now? Take care, my boy, or you may find yourself in a fix before you know it."

As he entered the breakfast parlor, he looked eagerly around, but no Jacquetta was to be seen. Mr. De Vere was there, reading some English papers; and Frank sat pulling the ears of his favorite terrier through his fingers. Augusta entered, pale, and cold, and stately, as ever, a few moments after, and acknowledged their salutations by a slight bend of her haughty head, and silently took her place at the head of the table.

"Is Jacquetta not coming down? said Mr. De Vere, as he took his seat; and, strange to say, Disbrowe's heart gave a sudden bound at the mention of her name.

"No," said Frank, sipping his coffee; "I don't think she will be down at all, to-day. She and that good-looking chap with the broken arm are keeping each other company. She let me in the room yesterday, and I was surprised to see how happy they were together."

A sickening feeling of disappointment came over Disbrowe. Had he seen Jacquetta every day and every time he chose, it is probably he would have felt perfectly indifferent about it—careless, when she came, and whither she went; but now she had spirited herself away, totally neglected him, and devoted herself assiduously to this provokingly handsome stranger, Captain Disbrowe's vanity was wounded; he felt irritated to hear she could laugh and enjoy herself while he was wandering about so lonely and *ennuied*; and more irritated still that she admitted Frank, and kept him out; and so, a little angry, and a good deal jealous, he arose in a decidedly ferocious mood, and half resolved to leave his ungrateful little cousin to her own devices and Spanish lovers, and post back full speed to England again, where young ladies knew how to treat their guests in a Christian fashion. There is many a Disbrowe in the world, quite as inconsistent as he.

He thought better of going to England, however, and ordered his horse, instead, for a gallop across the country, to exorcise the demons of *ennui* and chagrin. This time he did not fail to take his pistols, and keep his eye about him, and felt, in his present fierce mood, as if it would be rather a relief than otherwise to have a fracas with "Old Nick," to put his stagnating blood in circulation, if for nothing else; and indeed, in his state of mind at that moment, he would have found it rather pleasant than otherwise to shoot somebody.

So he rode on, at an exceedingly leisurely pace, looking around him now and then, and trying to make up his mind to hate, detest and abhor this uncivilized cousin of his, and contrasting her in his own mind with the dignified, languid, high-bred Lady Gertrudes and Lady Margarets of his acquaintance, and drawing conclusions any thing but flattering to her by the contrast, when the thundering sound of horses' hoofs dashing down the rocks behind him made him turn round, and, he beheld the object of his thoughts, mounted on her spirited little black Arabian, sweeping on toward him. How bright, how charming, how almost beautiful she looked at that moment, all afire with life, and health, and bounding spirits! It flashed across him in an instant, and every pulse gave an electric throb and leap at the sight, as though she had imparted some of her own exultant, joyous life to his languid self.

"A race! a race! a steeple-chase! Come on, cousin Alfred!" she shouted; and as she swept thundering past she raised her whip and gave his mettled horse a cut that sent him off like an arrow from a bow.

With the ringing "Tally-ho!" of a foxhunter, she urged both horses on, and away they sped at a dizzy pace. Disbrowe's blood rose, his eye kindled with excitement, and pressing his hat down over his brows, he gathered up the loose reins and forgot everything but the maddening excitement of the race. On and on they flew, passing rocks, and valleys, and marshes, and moors, and level roads, keeping neck for neck, and each urging their horse to the utmost in their effort to conquer. Away and away, as if winged, over mountain gorges, and chasms, and clefts, and

fences, and ditches, taking everything before them! A look of determined resolution settled on the faces of both, as they sped on, that showed they would never give up while their horses could stand, and with whip and spur, and voice, they dashed madly on, heedless of everything in their furious career.

Suddenly Disbrowe checked his horse so quickly and sharply that he almost fell back on his haunches, confident that the mad "steeple-chase" was then and there brought to an end.

An immense gorge, an awful precipice yawned before them, full fifty feet deep, and lined with sharp, projecting rocks, at the bottom of which roared a mad, foaming torrent, swollen and resistless by the late spring rains. It was a leap—with all his boldness—he would not take, for a single false step would have hurled him to certain death. He had managed to get a few yards in advance of Jacquetta, and now he looked round to shout his victory, when to his horror and astonishment, he saw her rein back her horse for the fearful leap, and the next moment, with a high, defiant cry, she had vaulted over the terrible gorge!

"Beat!" she shouted, as she took off her plumed riding-hat and waved it exultingly above her head, "beat! hurrah!"

Disbrowe had sat frozen with horror to his seat, at the mad leap and saw with a shudder her horse's hind feet graze the very edge of the frightful chasm! But at her victorious shout, the danger was forgotten, and the blood rushed in a torrent to his very temples.

"Ha! ha! A De Vere against a Disbrowe, any day," laughed Jacquetta, on the other side, as she reined up her panting steed. "It's the old story of America against England again, and America is victorious! Hurrah for the stars and stripes! I say, cousin Alfred, how do you find yourself?" And she leaned back and laughed immoderately at his mortified face.

"Conquered," said Disbrowe, taking off his hat and bowing with courtly grace, "but I only imitate the example of all the rest of mankind, in being conquered by you."

"That's very pretty, indeed," said Jacquetta; "but still



it doesn't cover the disgrace of being beaten—and by a girl, too. Oh, cousin Alfred! I thought better things of you than this. It is well for you your lady-love is not here, to witness your defeat.”

“I wish I could induce you to bear that title, my dauntless little cousin,” said Disbrowe, gallantly.

“No, thank you. I had rather be excused. I shouldn't admire being the lady-love of any one I could beat so easily,” said Jacquetta.

“As you are strong, be merciful,” said Disbrowe, riding slowly up to where the chasm narrowed, and leaping across; “but you don't call that an easy victory, do you? One inch further, and where would you be now?”

“In heaven, very likely,” said Jacquetta, measuring the distance with her eye. “To tell the truth, it's a leap I wouldn't attempt in my cooler moments; but I forgot everything in the excitement of the race, and would have taken it even had I been sure of being dashed to the bottom. Who wouldn't prefer death to defeat?” she said, with a flashing eye.

“Well, I, for one,” said Disbrowe, in his customary careless tone. “I have an unlimited amount of faith in the old maxim—

‘He that fights and runs away,  
May live to fight another day.’”

“Your countrymen seem to believe unanimously in that,” said Jacquetta, with one of her sly, provoking glances; “they ought to have it inscribed under the lion and unicorn, and on all their banners; for it was their motto constantly, until they got their walking-papers from these American shores.”

“There was some pretty hard fighting first,” said Disbrowe, nettled. “Your American friends didn't have things all their own way, and had a pretty long reckoning to pay, in the end. A set of ragamuffins, fresh from the plow—one-half of them—who hardly knew even what they were fighting for.”

“Didn't they?” said Jacquetta. “That's all you know about it. *They* fought for God and their country: *your* friends for—a shilling a day!”

An angry reply rose to Disbrowe's lips, and then remembering he was speaking to a lady, he checked himself, and gave his horse a cut with his whip, that sent him on some yards in advance before he could stop himself. Jacquetta looked after him, and the old tantalizing, malicious smile he had learned to know so well, now curled her pretty lips.

"You'll spoil that fine gray, if you use him like that," she said, as she again joined him; "what did the poor thing do to merit that? You ought to have laid it over my shoulders, instead."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Jacquetta; but really, I forget myself sometimes; and you are—if you'll excuse my saying it—given to saying things not calculated to soothe sensitive minds, and—"

"You're proud, and got a shocking bad temper, and are not used to be talked to in such a fashion," interrupted Jacquetta. "Well, cousin Alf, I've seen people when they had a pain in one place, applying a blister to another, as a counter-irritant; and so, if you will look upon me as a human blister, sent on earth for your especial use and benefit, you will be apt sooner to obtain the virtue of resignation, which, together with patience and modesty, are beautiful things in young men. And now, to change the subject, why don't you ask after our young hero of the wounded arm?"

"Because I had given up all hopes of ever hearing or seeing anything of him again: and knowing he was in good hands, I thought inquiry unnecessary and impertinent," said Disdrowe.

"Ah, well, then I shan't tell you anything about him. How did you pass the time yesterday?"

"Miss Augusta played for me; I had a game of chess, and rode out in the afternoon, and passed it altogether pleasantly enough. You enjoyed yourself very much, too, with your handsome patient, Frank says. What a fortunate fellow he is, to be sure."

The meaning tone in which the last words were uttered, made Jacquetta look up, and her face flushed scarlet as she met his knowing eyes. For one instant her eyes flashed fire, and there was a passionate motion of her arm;

but the next, as if another thought had struck her, she checked herself, and laughed aloud.

"What a far-seeing, clear-sighted thing man is!" she said, scornfully. "Oh, wise young judge! And so you would imply that Jack De Vere has found a patient and lost her heart both together. *Ma foi!* what a thing it is to see through a mill-stone!"

It was Disbrowe's turn to feel embarrassed for a moment; but that young gentleman's *sang froid* and admirable *nonchalance* seldom deserted him for many seconds at a time, so the next he replied, in his customary tone of easy confidence:

"Not exactly, Miss Jacquetta; for the very serious reason that I very much doubt whether you have a heart at all."

"Because I am insensible to the manifold attractions and fascinations of the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe, and have not fallen down at his feet and worshiped, as so many of my sensible and lovable sex have already done? Is that the reason?" she said, with a short laugh.

"Not at all," said Disbrowe; but it was so near the truth that he had to laugh, too. "You do not suppose I have such an inordinate share of vanity as to imagine I could ever touch your heart?"

"Well, there's no saying. I think it very likely you could stretch your faith even to a pinnacle so absurdly high as that. Men are such a set, composed of vanity and whiskers, every mother's son of 'em!" said Jacquetta.

"A sweeping assertion, that. And am I set down in that catalogue?" said Disbrowe.

"You? Oh, well, I don't know. I haven't taken the trouble to think about it yet," said Jacquetta, in a tone of provoking indifference. "It is probable that if ever I do, such will be my decision. But look there"—and she pointed with her whip—"there is the very Queen of the Kelpies, taking an airing!"

Disbrowe looked, and saw, to his surprise, the little girl Orrie, of the lone house, bounding, flying, leaping, with the agility of a mountain kid, over the rocks—her long, elfish locks unbound, and streaming around her little elfish face with its supernaturally large, bright, glittering black eyes.

"Hallo! little Oriole, by all that's startling. Where did that little Witch of Endor start from? I say, Orrie, Orrie! Come here."

The little girl heard his shout, and turning round, shaded her eyes with her hand from the sun, and peered at him; then with a glad cry of recognition, she darted over the rocks, and in an instant had seized the stirrup, swung herself up before him on his horse, flung her arms around his neck, and gave the astonished and laughing young Englishman a crushing hug.

"Upon my word," said Jacquetta, "an enthusiastic welcome."

Orrie turned round and peered at Jacquetta, and laughed, and nodded, and clung closer to Disbrowe.

"And so you are glad to see me, Orrie?" said Disbrowe, still laughing. "Where in the world did you drop from on these bare rocks? Not from the sky?"

"Lor', no!" said Orrie, in contempt at the idea. "Old Grizzle whipped me, and I ran off—I always do when she whips me, the ugly old thing. I shan't go back, either, till it's dark."

"Well, won't she whip you again, then?" said Disbrowe.

"No—Uncle Till won't let her. He'll be there, and he likes me. I wish you would give me a ride on your horse. Will you?"

"Certainly," said Disbrowe, moving on. "Why, Orrie, I thought you had forgotten all about me ere this."

"I guess I hain't," said Orrie, soberly, turning round to give him another kiss, and then clapping her hands to make the horse go faster. "I've been thinking about you ever since. Oh! what a nice horse to go this is!"

"And you have no kindly greeting for me, Orrie?" said Jacquetta. "Is he to receive all your attention?"

"Oh," said Orrie, "everybody says you don't care for anybody, and don't want kisses or nothin'."

"And so, because I don't care for anybody, no one is to love me?" said Jacquetta, in something so like a sorrowful tone that Disbrowe looked at her, surprised at her heeding the little elf's words.

He spoke to her, but she replied briefly; and for nearly



half an hour she rode beside them in silence, and with a sort of dark gloom shadowing her face.

Little Orrie prattled continually, giving Disbrowe occasional embraces to fill up the pauses, until Jacquetta almost coldly suggested their return.

"There now, Orrie, will you be able to find your way back, do you think?" said Disbrowe, as she sprung down in a flying leap.

"Be sure I will," said Orrie. "Good-by. I'll come to see you some day."

"Thank you," said the young gentleman, laughing.

And the next instant she was bounding and hopping like a blackbird from rock to rock.

The same look of dark gloom still lay on the bright face of Jacquetta, as they turned toward Fontelle; and until half the way was over, she never spoke, save to briefly answer his questions. At last he said:

"You seem strangely out of spirits, my dear cousin. May I ask what is the matter?"

"I am thinking of that child and her words," said Jacquetta. "Somehow, the sight of that little girl always affects me strangely; something in those eerie black eyes of hers almost frightens me. A strange feeling, is it not? I wish you could tell me what it means."

"I wish I could," said Disbrowe. "Perhaps she is your spiritual affinity, whatever that is. Frank says she looks like you."

"Who don't I look like?" said Jacquetta, looking up and breaking into a laugh. "I am the image of Captain Nick Tempest and little Orrie Howlet, and, consequently, a cross between a demon and a goblin. I won't think of it, though; and now, that being gone, I am myself again. I'll race you home, Cousin Alfred, or have you had enough of racing for one while?"

"No—I must have my revenge, and retrieve my wounded honor. So lead off."

With a laugh and a cheer, Jacquetta started, and both galloped on over "brake, bush, and scar," at a reckless, headlong pace, keeping neck and neck until Fontelle was reached.

"Unrevenged yet!" exclaimed Disbrowe striking an

attitude, as Jacquetta, declining his aid, leaped lightly off her horse, and ran up the steps and entered the house.

With a saucy nod of her curly head Jacquetta disappeared, and passed on until she reached Augusta's room, and there she paused and knocked softly.

There was no response, and she knocked again, more loudly. Still there was no reply, and Jacquetta turned the handle and entered.

And there a terrible sight met her eyes.

On the floor lay Augusta, prone on her face, her whole form writhing like one in unendurable agony, her long, wild, black hair streaming, unbound, around her, her hands clenched till her delicate veins stood out like whipcord, every motion quivering with unbearable torture. Startled and alarmed—albeit both to her were unusual—Jacquetta went over, and, catching her arm, exclaimed:

“Augusta!”

With a fearful shriek and maddened bound, she was on her feet, confronting her—her beautiful face distorted with anguish and remorse—her whole countenance so altered and terrible that Jacquetta involuntarily recoiled a step as she beheld her.

“Augusta! Augusta! Good heavens! What is the meaning of this?” cried Jacquetta.

But Augusta, with a wild, moaning cry, sunk down on a seat, and, with a convulsive shudder, hid her face in her hands.

“Augusta, my sister! tell me what has wrought this frightful change in you—once so cold, so calm, so proud, so queenly!”

“GUILT!” cried Augusta, dashing away Jacquetta's clinging hands, “guilt so black, so foul, so horrible that the very fiends themselves would shudder at it; guilt that it would curdle your blood, freeze your heart, blight your soul to hear; guilt the very name of which if name it have—it would blister and blacken my lips to utter! Go—leave me! I ask nothing—I want nothing, but to be alone—and die!”

And with a cry of despair, she sunk down again, shuddering, and collapsed.

Jacquetta stepped back, and calmly regarded her.

"You are insane, Augusta, or in the delirium of a brain fever. I shall send for a doctor."

"Oh, leave me! leave me! leave me!" moaned Augusta, in a dying voice.

"Not in this state. I should be as mad as you if I did. I will stay with you until you come to your senses," said Jacquetta, sitting down.

The invincible determination in her voice seemed to pierce through every other feeling in the reeling brain of Augusta. She lifted up her face, and, with a suddenness that was more startling than her former paroxysms of anguish and despair, rose calmly and haughtily to her feet.

"Will you leave me, Jacquetta? I wish to be alone. Go!"

"Augusta, let me stay! Indeed, your mind is wandering—let me stay!"

Without a word, and with a look of one petrified to stone, Augusta swept across the room, and laid her hand on the door.

"Nay, then, if you will not remain with me, I will not send you from your room," said Jacquetta, in a troubled voice, as she, too, started up. "Do not go, Augusta. I will leave you. But, oh, my dearest sister, is there nothing I can do for you?" she said, beseechingly, clasping her hands.

"Nothing—but leave me!"

With a sigh, Jacquetta left the room, and she heard the key turn behind her in the lock.

The proud heart of Augusta De Vere might bleed and break, but it could do both alone.

She turned away, and passed on to the room of her patient, where she found that handsome youth fast asleep, and, seeing her presence was not required there either, she finally sought her own room.

It was rather dull down-stairs that evening, for neither Augusta nor Jacquetta appeared at all. Mr. De Vere and Frank both retired early, and so Captain Disbrowe was left alone, in no very angelic frame of mind, to wander through the lower rooms and amuse himself as best he might, and wish Jacquetta would join him; but no

Jacquetta came. At length, putting on his hat, he set off for a stroll, with his own thoughts for company.

It was a clear, starlit night, mild and warm as June; and, tempted by its quiet beauty, he walked on and on, returning, at last, by the north wing, that, in its gloomy silence, had a strange fascination for him. While he stood leaning against a broken pillar, looking up at it, he became conscious of voices near him; and a moment after two dark forms appeared from within the shelter of a low, ruined wall, overrun with ivy. One was the tall form of a man, muffled in a cloak, and wearing a slouched hat drawn down over his face, completely hiding it from view, and the other was—could he believe his eyes?—the stately form of his proud cousin, Augusta!

Even in his surprise—and it was intense—he saw that they seemed to shrink from each other with a sort of dread, or horror, or fear; and that both were extremely agitated. Once he saw his cousin stop and make a frantic, passionate gesture, as if she would have hurled herself madly upon the stones at her feet, and the man put out his arm as if to catch her, and then draw it back and recoil still further from her. Then they turned an angle of the wall and disappeared, and he was alone in the light of the bright, beautiful stars that looked serenely down on that strange meeting; as they have looked upon many other since the world began.

With an irresistible impulse, he turned to follow them, but both were gone—vanished like phantoms of the night; and he turned to retrace his steps, wondering inwardly where the secrets of this strange old house were to end.



## CHAPTER XI.

## CAPTAIN DISBROWE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

“ Ah ! did we take for heaven above  
 But half such pains as we  
 Take, day and night, for woman’s love,  
 What angels we should be.”

—MOORE.

“ THE top of the mornin’ to ye, captain, darlin’ ! ” said a voice, in a slightly foreign accent. And the next moment, Master Frank, with a whoop that spoke well for the strength of his lungs, sprung up the front steps, and stood beside Disbrowe, who was lounging indolently against one of the quaint old pillars supporting the doorway, looking at the north wing, and thinking of the little incident of the previous night.

“ The same to yourself, my sprig of shillaly,” said Disbrowe, lifting his eyes, but without moving from his lazy position.

“ I say, Frank,” he added, suddenly, “ do you know anything about that mysterious old tower or wing over there ? I think there’s something wrong about it.”

“ Why ? ” asked Frank, casting an uneasy look, first on the speaker, and then on the place indicated.

“ Well, from nothing that I know of my own knowledge, of course,” replied Disbrowe ; “ but it has a confoundedly suspicious, ghostly look about it for one thing, and I saw something strange there a few nights ago.”

“ You did ! ” said Frank, with a start, “ What was it ? ”

“ A light ! ”—said Disbrowe, taking out a cigar, and biting the end off—“ a light passing the front window, and shining through the ivy leaves. It was late—about midnight, I think—and, not feeling sleepy, I had turned out to admire the beauties of Nature, and look at the moon, and all that sort of thing, when, to my surprise, I saw a light flashing through the windows, and then disappearing.”

“ Oh, pooh !—a will-o’-the-wisp—an *ignis fatuus*—a jack-o’-lantern,” said Frank, giving himself an uneasy twist.

"It was a jack-o'-lantern with a vengeance!" said Disbrowe, laughing.

"Eh?" said Frank, looking sharply up.

"My dear young friend," said Captain Disbrowe, lighting his cigar, and drawing a few whiffs, "allow me to say that breaking yourself of that nasty habit of speaking in abrupt jerks would be a good thing to do. It gives me a sensation akin to a galvanic shock, or a twinge of toothache, to listen to you. I was informing you, I believe, that I saw a light in that old deserted place there, if I don't mistake, which piece of information allow me to repeat now, if you did not clearly comprehend it the first time."

"It must have been one of the servants," said Frank, taking out a knife, and commencing to whittle.

"Perhaps," said Captain Disbrowe, with a dubious smile, as he meditatively watched the wreaths of smoke curling upward.

"You don't believe me?" said Frank, looking at him.

"My dear boy," said the young officer, in his cold, careless way, "you don't suppose I could possibly be so impolite as to doubt your word? At the same time, my amiable young friend, allow me to ask you if your servants are in the habit of taking nocturnal excursions through those deserted rooms, or what possible reason—since they have been deserted for the last twenty years—they can have at all for going there?"

Frank looked cautiously over his shoulder for a moment to see that no one was listening, and then coming closer to Disbrowe, and sinking his voice to a cautious whisper, he said:

"I tell you what, cousin Alfred, there is something queer about that old place. I've always thought so, and I've seen lots of little things, now and then, to confirm the belief. I don't know what it is; and what's more, they all take precious good care I shan't know either; but I'll find out one of these days, as sure as my name's Frank De Vere—which it ain't, for that matter. Jack's posted, I know, and I'm sure she has something to do with it. Did you ever hear a strange sort of music there of nights?"

"Why?" said Disbrowe, evasively, remembering his promise to Jacquetta.

"Because I have, and more than once. When I get into bed I flatter myself I can beat any one to death in the sleeping line; but there have been times when I woke up, and I have heard the queerest, solemnest sort of far-off music at the dead of night, and I am quite sure it came from some place around here. I asked uncle about it the first time I heard it, and I wish you had seen the look he gave me, and the terrific way he thundered; 'Begone, sir! and hold your tongue, and never speak of such a thing again at your peril!' It beat a stern father in a melodrama all to nothing; so I bothered him no more after that."

"I wonder you never asked Jack."

"Well, I don't know; there a sort of touch-me-not flash in Jack's eyes now and then when you tread on forbidden ground, and somehow I've always felt that she's more concerned in this affair than any of the rest. Of course, I don't know—I only guess; and, as it happens, I generally guess pretty accurately. 'Tis the evening of life gives me mystical lore.'"

"And coming events cast their shadows before," said Disbrowe, pointing to an approaching shadow; and, even as he spoke, Jacquetta herself flashed up the steps, and stood bright and smiling before them.

"*Bon matin, messieurs!* Hope I don't intrude?"

"Angels can never be intruders!" said Disbrowe, flinging away his cigar, and touching his hat. "A thousand welcomes, my bright Aurora!"

"Now don't!" said Jacquetta, with a slight grimace. "I can't stand too much of that, you know. It's like burnt brandy—a very little of it goes a long way, and is very filling at the price. What momentous affairs were you discussing so learnedly just now, as I came up?"

"We were discussing Miss Jacquetta De Vere!"

"Well, I don't know as you could have found a better subject, at once edifying and instructive. But what say you to breakfast now, as a change of subject?"

"A most agreeable change," said Disbrowe; "and though, perhaps, not so delightful as the other, a good

deal more substantial. I move an immediate adjournment."

"I second the motion," said Frank, shutting up his knife, and putting it in his pocket.

"What is the programme for to-day?" said Jacquetta, as they moved toward the breakfast-parlor.

"Haven't decided yet," said Disbrowe. "Most likely you will devote yourself solely to our handsome patient, in which case, by the time evening comes, you will very probably find my melancholy remains suspended from the nearest tree—a victim to the blue-devils and the most hard-hearted of cousins!"

"A consummation devoutly to be wished!" said Jacquetta, with a laugh. "But, having some regard for the feelings of the family, allow me to suggest an alternative to so direful a catastrophe. I am going to visit one of my pensioners this afternoon, about a mile from this; and, if you will promise to be good, and not pay me too many compliments, you may come. I have spoken."

"A hundred thousand thanks, most angelic of thy sex!" said Disbrowe, laying his hand on his heart, and bowing after the manner of gentlemen on the stage, who go down head-foremost, until nothing is to be seen but the tails of their coat. "I am ready to swear by 'all the vows that ever men have broken,' as my friend Shakespeare has it, to talk to order on any subject, from love and murder down to the latest style of 'gents' superior vests,' for so delectable a privilege. I'm ready to vow the severest obedience to all and every command that may issue from lips so beautiful; and what's more, as my friend Shakespeare further remarks, am ready to 'seal the bargain with a holy kiss.'"

"And I'll witness the transaction," said Frank, with a chuckle. "But here comes Gusty."

As he spoke Augusta swept past, with one of her slight, haughty courtesies, and took her place at the table, followed by the others. Disbrowe thought of the mysterious interview of the night before, and looked at her curiously; but the cold, pale face was high and immovable, and marble-like in its lofty pride and repelling *hauteur*. Not the faintest trace of emotion was visible in that



coldly-beautiful face ; the long dark lashes swept the white cheeks, and veiled the dusky, brooding eyes ; the pale lips were compressed—scorning, in their curved pride, all help and sympathy ; the shiny, jetty hair was combed down either side of the high, noble, queenly brow—like alabaster in its purity—and simply knotted behind the haughty head. Had she been of steel or stone she would have looked as human as she did then ; and yet this was the girl he had seen ready to dash herself on the pitiless rocks the night before, in her intolerable agony of woe and despair. She scarcely spoke or moved or lifted her eyes while she sat with them—there in body, but oh, so immeasurably distant in spirit ! But once in answering some question of his, she had for a second or two, looked up, and then he saw the dark, settled night of anguish in those large, melancholy eyes.

Jacquetta was, as usual, the life and soul of them all—keeping up a constant war of words, and a steady fire of short, sharp, stinging repartee with the company generally—sometimes provoking Disbrowe to laughter, and sometimes to anger, and appearing most delightfully indifferent to both. Then she undertook to give an account of his escapade with Captain Nick Tempest to his uncle, burlesquing the whole affair, and holding him especially up in so ridiculous a light that she had the old gentleman and Frank laughing most heartily, and had Disbrowe so indignant and mortified that he could have shaken her then and there with a right good will. But thinking it beneath his dignity as a man, he joined in the laugh against himself.

After breakfast the young lady went off to see Jacinto—as she took the trouble of informing our gallant young officer before starting ; and he, with Frank, sauntered out to a trout-stream the latter knew of, where they could pass the morning. As usual, their theme was Jack ; and an inexhaustible theme they found it, and mighty interesting to both.

“She spoke of going to see one of her pensioners,” said Disbrowe. “How many has she got ?”

“Oh, lots. And a precious lot, too. There’s one of them, now,” said Frank, pointing to a hump-backed, idiot-

looking boy who approached them holding a brace of partridges. "Hallo, Dickie! Where are you bound for?"

"There," said the lad, pointing with a nod and a grin toward Fontelle.

"Who are the birds for?" said Frank, attempting to look at them.

"You let 'em alone!" said Dickie, dodging back and assuming a belligerent attitude. "They're for her—Miss Jack; you let them alone—will you?"

"All right," said Frank, laughing. "Go on, Dickie. Give my compliments to the town-pump the next time you see it."

"And that's one of her *protégés*?" said Disbrowe, glancing carelessly after him. "An interesting one, upon my word! If ever I do that sort of a thing, I shall only adopt pretty little girls."

"And marry them when they grow up—not a bad notion, that," laughed Frank. "And as pretty little girls are to be had for the asking, you will soon have a houseful. Suppose you begin with little Orrie Howlet?"

"Faith, I shouldn't mind. She came next door to proposing the last time I saw her. But how came Miss Jack to adopt that picture of ugliness?"

"Well, 'thereby hangs a tale.' It was one day, about two years ago, Jack was down to Green Creek; and, passing by a tavern, she saw a lot of rowdies and loafers crowding round poor, silly Dickie, laughing, taunting, jeering, and kicking, and pulling, and hauling the poor fellow until they had him half-maddened. A sight like that was enough to make Jack's blood blaze; and in a moment she had darted fiercely through them, and stood defending Dick, stamping her foot, and blowing them up right and left as only she can—calling them a set of cowards and rascals, the whole of them. I expect they were rather startled to see such a little fury, for all fell back but one half-tipsy fellow, who seized her by the arm in a threatening manner. With a perfect shriek of passion, Jack sprung back, and dashed her hand in his face with such force that, big as he was, he reeled back, and saw more stars, I reckon, than he ever saw before. Dick had taken to his heels the moment he found himself free;

so Jacquetta, having stopped to assure them once more that they were a set of low, mean, cowardly knaves to so abuse Dickie, took her departure, while the rest forcibly held back the drunken scoundrel, who seemed very anxious to pommel her."

"And has he never attempted to injure her since?" said Disbrowe.

"No," said Frank. "A very remarkable circumstance caused him to change his mind. Shortly after the adventure I have just related, news came that Goose Creek was rising, and was likely to carry away the bridge. Jack mounted Lightning and rode down; and there, sure enough, an immense crowd was gathered on the banks, watching the creek roaring, and foaming, and dashing along; and there was the bridge all broken—and shaking planks that every second might be carried away. Just as Jack reached the place, there was a great cry that a man had been carried off the bank, and directly they heard his screams for help; and there he was clinging to a large rock in the middle of the creek, and shrieking out to them for God's sake not to let him drown. A lot of men got a rope, and tried to throw it to him, but it was impossible for him to reach it, unless some one ventured out on the plank and risked their own lives for him. No one would, however, for he was a miserable, drunken wretch; and in another minute he would have been swept away, if Jacquetta had not sprung off her horse, seized the rope, and while the crowd stood speechless with horror, darted out on the plank. I tell you, cousin Alfred, as they saw her standing there, that young girl, on that frail plank, over that foaming torrent, so bravely risking her life to save another's, every man, woman and child there dropped on their knees, and the silence of death reigned. She reached the middle of the plank, she flung him the rope; but before she could turn, the plank was swept from under her, and she was hurled headlong into the foaming torrent."

"Heavens!" gasped Disbrowe, with a paling cheek, as though he saw it before him.

"There was a cry as of one mighty voice from that crowd," continued Frank, "as they saw her fall; but clear and high above all arose her ringing voice: 'Pull, men—

pull! Don't let me drown!" She held on firmly, and the next minute the pair of them stood high—and *dry* I was going to say, only it wouldn't be true—on dry land. And a hearty cheer from the spectators greeted them."

Frank's cheeks were flushed, and his eyes were glistening at the recollection.

"And there she stood—God bless her!—dripping like a water-goddess, and listening to their shouts as coolly and composedly as though they were so many French dolls. I stood there, hugging her, I believe, and crying, and laughing, and shouting all together—to all of which her sole reply was, as she jerked herself away, 'Frank, don't squeeze me so; don't you see my wet clothes are spoiling your new pants?'"

This winding up was so characteristic of Jacquetta, that Disbrowe began to laugh.

"And the man—what of him?"

"Oh, he was the same fellow that she struck for taking hold of her when she interfered in behalf of Dick—and a worthless scamp he was; but from that day he reformed; got sober and industrious, and is a first-rate old fellow now; and would die gladly, I believe in my soul, for Jack. So, there's the history of *two* of her *protégés*."

It was strange the effect these and similar stories of Jacquetta's daring and kindness of heart had on Disbrowe. Softened and tender his thoughts of her grew, until his cheek flushed, and his eye fired, and his pulses bounded, and he drew a long, quivering breath, and he wished from the very depths of his soul she were an heiress, with a rent-roll of twenty thousand a year, that he might dare to love her. As it was, he might as well venture to fall in love with the moon, for all hope he ever could have of marrying her.

"That's the worst of it with poor devils of younger brothers like me, without a rap to bless themselves with! They can't fall in love like decent Christians, and marry whom they please; but, whew! Alfred Disbrowe, my boy, do you know what you are talking about? What have *you* to do with falling in love—you who are signed sealed and delivered—as good as married already? I wish I had never seen Jack De Vere!" he exclaimed,



almost passionately. "That girl can bedevil, with her wild, witching ways, whoever she pleases, and I'll be sure to go and make a fool of myself before I have done! Oh, Jack De Vere! you compound of inconsistencies! was there ever one like you before in the world?"

Sitting there, he thought of her in all her changing moods, until the momentary gloom that had overspread his fine face passed away, and again he laughed.

"What a sensation she would make among the titled dames who crowd Fontelle Park, to be sure—wild Yankee girl! I think I see Lady Margaret's look of horror and consternation, Earnecliffe's haughty dismay, and the wonder and amazement, not to say terror, of the rest. How Tom Vane, and Lord Austrey, and all the rest of the fast bloods, would rave about her; and how she would be toasted and talked of—the *lionne* of the day! Heigho! what a pity it is a man dare not do as he pleases! If some kind fairy would give me fifty thousand pounds this moment, I believe, in my soul, I would marry the girl, if she would have me, in spite of fate and—Norma Macdonald!"

In a more thoughtful mood than was customary with the gay, careless, *nonchalant* young guardsman, he walked back to Fontelle, and watched Jacquetta, during dinner, with a strange mingling of pain and pleasure. So gay, so bright, so bewitching she was—this sparkling fay of the moonlight—this bright-winged little bird of Paradise—this daring, dauntless-hearted Joan of Arc—that he would have given worlds, at that moment, could he, for one instant, have called her his. With a thrill that tingled through every vein in his heart, Captain Alfred Disbrowe—the brother of an earl—a peer of the realm in prospective—made the discovery that he was falling in love, and with this penniless, red-haired "Yankee girl."

An hour after dinner, she came flying in her light, breezy way, down-stairs, equipped for her walk, and looking more beautiful, he thought, than he had ever seen her before. Her dark-blue dress and black velvet shawl set off the exquisite fairness of her pearly complexion; her cheeks were flushed; her gray eyes shone and sparkled like stars; her smiling mouth looked more like a rose-bud

than ever, and her short, bright, dancing curls flashed around her snow-white, polished, laughing forehead, with a careless grace of their own, that almost surprised Disbrowe into an inward conviction that there *was* a possibility of red hair looking pretty. But, then, the honorable captain was falling in love with their fairy owner, and could not be expected to be an impartial judge.

"Do you know what I was doing this morning?" said Jacquetta, as they walked along.

"Well," said Disbrowe, "I don't pretend to divination; but I think I can guess. You were, most probably, sitting beside your handsome patient."

"Exactly! You are as smart at guessing as a Yankee. But I was doing something more. I was reading."

"Ah! were you? Your prayer-book, I suppose?"

"Dear me! how sarcastic we are! No—it was a novel—an old story; so old and simple that the fastidious, refined Captain Disbrowe would pitch it away with a contemptuous 'pshaw!' as unworthy his imperial notice; yet I liked it."

"Captain Disbrowe would have liked anything you did, my dear child."

"Oh, would he? Leaping over the Demon's Gorge, for instance. He didn't seem to like that!"

"Most malicious of fairies! am I never to hear the last of that?"

"Don't pay compliments, then. But, about this story—I was reading it to Jacinto, and he liked it, too; and he's a judge of good things, Jacinto is. Knows so much too—is a heap too clever for a foreigner, in fact."

"No doubt you think so," said Disbrowe, bitterly; "he is perfection in your eyes—a young jackanapes!"

"Come, Captain Disbrowe, be civil. I can't stand this, you know. But, in this old story I was telling you of, when you were so impolite as to put me out, there was a young nobleman who fell in love with a peasant girl—one of his father's tenants—and she fell in love with him."

"A peasant girl! What a precious fool he must have been!" said Disbrowe, *sotto voce*.

"Well, his father heard it, and raised no end of a row. In vain the lover pleaded; the old gentleman was inexor-

able—wouldn't be brought to view matters in their proper light at all, and ended by banishing his son from home; and, when he got him away, compelling the girl to marry somebody else."

"Well, I dare say she was willing enough," said Disbrowe; "girls generally are, to get married. What did the fortunate young gentleman do when he heard it? Married some Lady Seraphine Ann, I suppose."

"No, sir! he died of a broken heart! What do you think of that?" said Jacquetta, triumphantly.

Disbrowe laughed. "What a paragon he was! Ought to be labeled and sent to the British Museum, as the eighth, last, and greatest wonder of the world. A man with a broken heart! Ye gods!" And Captain Disbrowe laughed immoderately.

"Oh, you may laugh," said Jacquetta; "but my belief is, that there are some men who have hearts to break, in this flinty world, if one could only find them. Now, what would you do, cousin Alf, for a woman you loved?"

"Something better than break my heart, I should hope."

"Are you quite sure you have one to break? Would you risk your life for her?"

"No; something better."

"Die, then?"

"Die?—not I! Better still."

"What, then? I give it up."

"Make her Mrs. D."

"That would be a climax of happiness, certainly! Oh, the self-conceit of man! And so that is all the extent to which your gallantry would carry you, is it?"

"Ah, *ma belle*, what would I not risk for you!" said Disbrowe, softly, with his handsome eyes fixed on her face.

Jacquetta laughed. "Dreadfully obliged, I'm sure! And here goes to test that declaration. Climb up there and bring me those flowers."

A huge, steep bowlder, almost perpendicular, reared up near them, and at a dizzy height from the ground a cluster of pretty pink flowers grew in a cleft. Jacquetta pointed to these, and said, imperatively, "Climb!"

Had she told him to spring into the seething crater of Mount Vesuvius in that tone, he would have obeyed.

Before the word had well passed her lips, he was already on his way up the giddy steep.

It was a dangerous place to venture, only suited to cats and sailors, and other wild animals, accustomed to walk on air; but Captain Disbrowe was young, lithe, and active, and went up with marvelous speed, clinging to loose pieces of rock, and hardy, projecting plants. Jacquetta stood below, watching him with a queer smile on her pretty face.

He reached the cleft at last, seized the flowers, and prepared to descend; but—alas for his knight-errantry!—the treacherous stone on which he stood gave way, and the next instant he lay stunned and motionless on the ground.

With a great cry, Jacquetta sprung forward and bent over him. Without sign of life he lay, and kneeling beside him, she raised his head, crying out in tones of passionate grief:

“Oh, Alfred! cousin Alfred! look up—speak to me!—say you are not hurt! Oh, he is dead! and I have killed him!”

She bent over him as he lay, cold and still, and her lips touched his cheek. The next instant, she recoiled in terror at the hot rush of blood that followed that slight caress.

But that was enough. As a slight dent with a boy's foot once overflowed the dam, and changed it to a foaming torrent, so everything was swept with resistless force from his mind at the touch of those rosy lips, save the one thrilling, tumultuous thought that he loved her, with all his heart and soul. The next moment she was in his arms, held there almost fiercely, while he stooped over her, with a strange fire burning in his dark eyes, and a strange flush on his handsome face, crying out fiercely, passionately:

“Jacquetta! Jacquetta! I love you!”

With a cry that he never forgot—a cry fiercer, wilder, more passionate than his own—she dashed his retaining arms away, wrenched herself from his grasp, and clasping her hands over her ears, as if to shut out the sound, fled—fled for more than life—away.



## CHAPTER XII.

## A STRANGE MEETING.

“Dare you linger here at midnight,  
Alone when the wind is about?  
And the bat, and the newt, and the viper,  
And the creeping things come out.  
Beware of these ghostly chambers,  
Search not what my heart hath been,  
Lest you find a phantom sitting  
Where once there sat a queen.”

—OWEN MEREDITH.

It was in rather a peculiar mood, to use a mild phrase, that the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe walked home. There was a great many conflicting feelings surging through his mind, and chief among them were astonishment and mortification. Did ever man in this world make a proposal, and have it answered in such fashion as this? Did ever any living being behold such a provoking little minx as this fierce, unreadable, little enigma—this savage little wildcat, who unsheathed her claws and scratched, the moment he came too near—this young tornado—this small flash of lightning—this little grenade, all jets, and fire, and sparkles? It would have been a comfort to get hold of her—to shake her—to pull her ears, and then love her a thousand-fold more than ever. Captain Disbrowe was just in the mood to do both. He could have boxed her ears with all his heart, and yet never had that heart thrilled in all his life as it was thrilling at that moment to the sound of her name. How his pulses leaped, and his blood bounded at the recollection of her small, involuntary, cousinly caress. Oh, Jacquetta! Jacquetta!—you little inflammation of the heart!—you little thunderclap! how much you had to answer for, for throwing the indolent, nonchalant, careless Captain Alfred Disbrowe into such a state of mind as that!

He reached home, at last—half-hoping, half-dreading, to meet Jacquetta. The drawing-room door lay open,

and a clear, sweet voice he knew only too well, was singing:

“Oh, the Laird o’ Cockpen, he’s proud and he’s great,  
His mind’s taken up wi’ the things o’ the state.”

“There! there is a hole in the ballad! Where’s papa, Frank?”

“Up-stairs, in the library,” said Frank, sauntering out, encountering Disbrowe in the hall.

Disbrowe went in—half afraid to do it, too, for he could not tell how Jacquetta would meet him. She was lying back, half-buried in the downy cushion of a lounge, caressing her huge, savage dog, Lion, who crouched at her feet, licking her hand and watching her with his eyes of flame. As Disbrowe entered, he started up, with a growl like distant thunder.

“Now, Lion, be quiet!—have manners, can’t you? It’s only your cousin Alfred, you know. Come in, my dear sir; I’m alone here, and feel awfully blue.” And a dreary yawn attested the truth of her words.

As Captain Disbrowe, angry and provoked at this unlooked-for sort of greeting, obeyed, and flung himself, half-sullenly, into an arm-chair, her eyes fell on the dearly-bought flowers which, almost unknown to himself, he still carried in his hand.

“Oh, what pretty flowers! Hand them here, cousin Alfred. Lion, go after them.”

Lion dutifully got up and trotted over, took the flowers in his mouth and brought them to his mistress.

“How sweet they are—how pretty—almost as delicious as the giver!” And the wicked fairy looked up, and laughed in his face.

With a suppressed oath, Captain Disbrowe sprung to his feet and began pacing, with passionate strides, up and down. Of all her wilful moods, he had not supposed she would meet him like this: scorn and anger—blushing and avoidance—silence and hauteur, he could have borne and managed; but this—this sublime forgetfulness of the whole thing—this audacious coolness and unconcern! Had she been trying for years, she could not have hit on a way so likely to enrage him; and I am afraid, as

he ground his teeth, more than one naughty word escaped.

Jacquetta arched her eyebrows, and pursed up her lips.

"Why, cousin Alfred! Good gracious! I wonder you ain't ashamed! Do you know what you said, sir?"

"Jacquetta, you will drive me mad!" he exclaimed, passionately.

"Dear me! you said it again! Now, Lion, behave yourself! Don't eat all my flowers that way!"

"Jacquetta, will you listen to me?" he cried, stopping before her in his excited walk.

"Well—proceed."

"Jacquetta, I love you."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it, I'm sure. It shows a good deal of good sense on your part. Now, Lion, will you stop eating my flowers?"

"Oh, saints and angels! grant me patience! Jacquetta, you will drive me mad!"

"Well, you told me that before, if I don't mistake. What's the good of repeating it? Go on."

With a fierce imprecation, he was up again, striding up and down as if he really was mad. Jacquetta rose on her elbow, adjusted her pillow, so that she could lie and watch him comfortably.

"Cruel!—heartless!—unwomanly!" burst passionately from his lips, as he strode on without heeding her.

She looked at him with a strange, mocking smile on her face, and drew the ears of her savage pet through her fingers.

"Not tired yet," she said, when he ceased. "Perhaps you are going into training for a pedestrian?"

"Insulting!—unfeeling coquette!" he bitterly cried. She arose, haughtily.

"You forget yourself, sir! Another word like that, and I leave the room!"

"Oh, Jacquetta! you are enough to drive a man crazy! but forgive me, I hardly knew what I was saying."

"So I think, Capain Disbrowe! Had you not better come to your senses as soon as possible?"

"Jacquetta, are you merciless? I have asked for bread—shall I get a stone?"

"You deserve a viper, sir! Sit down, I tell you!" she said, imperiously.

He obeyed, with something like a groan.

"Now, then, Captain Disbrowe, what do you want?"

"*You*, Jacquetta!—my love!—my darling!"

Oh, the infinite depth of mockery in her eyes and smile!

"Indeed! And what do you want of me, pray?"

"Oh, Jacquetta! what a question!"

"Is it? I see nothing extraordinary in it. If you came and asked me for Lion, here, I should probably ask you what you wanted of him, as well. And I rather fancy you would find it an easier question to answer than this."

He was silent, and bit his lip. The look of intense mockery on Jacquetta's face was mingled now with unutterable scorn.

"Oh, the wisdom of these men! Oh, this wonderful love of theirs! Oh, this unspeakable depth of refinement and delicacy! Lion, my boy, thank God you love me, and have not a man's heart!"

"Jacquetta!" he said, with a haughty flush, "what do you mean?"

"Oh, to be sure!" she said, "you do not know. If I had been one of your Lady Marys, or Lady Janes, would you have dared to talk to me like this? Because you found me a wild Yankee girl, who rode steeple-chases, played with dogs instead of Berlin wool and French novels, you thought you were free to insult me, and to talk to me as you would to a coal-heaver's daughter in England. Don't interrupt me, sir, and don't attempt to deny it; for knowing what we both know, such a declaration from you is nothing more nor less than an insult!"

He faced round, and the light of his dark, bright, handsome eyes shone full upon her face.

"What we both know?" he said, slowly. "May I ask what you mean by that, Miss Jacquetta?"

Her face flushed to the very temples, and for a second or two, her eyes fell.

"I won't tell you!" she said, defiantly. "But I know more than I ever learned from you!"

Her tone, hot at first, fell into its customary saucy



cadence, as she went on ; and she broke into a short laugh, and fell to caressing Lion again as she ceased.

“And this is my answer?” he said, bitterly.

“Your answer? Yes, sir! I hope it pleases you!”

“And this is Jacquetta?”

“At your service, sir. How do you like her?”

“Have you a woman’s heart, Jacquetta, or is there a stone in its place?”

“Perhaps there is.” And she laughed wickedly. “If so, you ought to be satisfied, for you said, away back there in your first chapter, that I had given you a stone.”

“Have you no mercy?”

“None for my foes. The motto of a true De Vere is, ‘War to the knife!’”

“Oh, tiger-heart!” cried Disbrowe. “Am I to get no reply but this?”

“Reply to what? Begin at the beginning of the catechism again, and see how I will answer you. Ask away, and never fear but you will get your answer.”

“I told you I loved you.”

“Yes—I have a faint recollection of the fact. But you don’t call that a question, I hope?”

“Nevertheless, I expected an answer.”

“Ah! What was it to be?”

“That you loved me in return.”

Jacquetta laughed ; and, springing up, began declaiming, - stage-fashion :

“ ‘ When in that moment, so it came to pass,  
Titania awaked, and straightway loved an—ass ! ’ ”

You see I can quote Shakespeare as well as you, Cousin Alfred.”

He ground his teeth with rage.

“Oh, heavens above! And this is what I have loved?”

“Don’t get excited, my good Alfred—my dear Alfred! Keep cool ; and if you find the air of this room heating, would you mind my insinuating a walk up and down the maple avenue, out there? The air, this cool spring day, will be a good thing to take.”

“Heart of flint!—heart of steel! A tigress would have more pity than you!”

"Pity!" she said, in a tone that made him start. She had risen to her feet, with one arm upraised, with her cheeks afire, and her eyes aflame. "Pity! Yes—I pity myself from the very depths of my soul, that I should ever have fallen low enough to listen to this!"

She swept across the room like a tragic queen, with the ringing tread of an outraged empress. That light in her eye, that fire in her cheek—all unusual there—what did it forebode?

"What have I said—what have I done—that you should dare to utter words like these? I am a wild, wilful, thoughtless girl—too fearless and masculine, it may be, for my sex—but is it my fault that God gave me a man's heart, to do, and dare, and brave? I was frank and open with you, because I thought you an honorable man—because I thought you would understand me; and I could have loved you as a brother. And you have returned it like this! Oh, Captain Disbrowe! it is worse than '*Et tu, Brute!*' You know, and I know, now that the scales have fallen from my eyes, how you regard me. Would you marry me?—would you take me to England?—would you show me to your friends—me, the mad, uncivilized North American savage—as your honored wife, and the future Lady Earnecliffe, of Disbrowe Park? No, sir—you never would! You never intended to! And, even if you would, could you, as a man of honor, have done so? Ask your own heart—if you have one—and let it reply."

It was her turn to pace up and down now, and she was doing it with a vengeance. He had leaned his elbow on the table and dropped his forehead on it, and his face was white and cold as marble.

"The name I bore might have saved me from insult; but it has not done so. Never, in all my life, have I fallen so low in my own eyes as I have done this day! It may be that I have deserved it; but, coming from you—oh, Cousin Alfred! *what* have I done that you should have sharpened this arrow for my heart?"

There was such passionate sorrow in her voice, that it moved him as nothing else had ever done; and lifting his head, he would have spoken, but she motioned him to silence with a wave of her hand.

"No—say nothing. It is too late! If I were the only one injured to-day, you might be forgiven; but that other—that other, to whom you are bound by vows death alone can ever break. Oh, Alfred Disbrowe! who shall forgive you for the wrong you have done her?"

Impetuously he started to his feet, and dashed back the clustering locks of his fair, brown hair.

"Jacquetta, this is not the first time you have insinuated something which must be explained—I repeat it, *must* be! What do you mean?"

She paused before him, and met his excited gaze, with eyes from which the fierce, angry light had died out; and a faint, a scarcely perceptible smile flickered around her mouth.

"Shall I really tell you?"

"Yes."

"And you mean to say you do not understand me?"

"I say nothing. I want you to explain."

"Then," she said, with a triumphant flash of her eye, "you shall have it! *What of Norma!*"

"Jacquetta!"

"Alfred!" she said, with a mocking smile.

"Who told you—how came you—"

"There, that is enough! Go—leave me!" And she opened the door and pointed out.

"First tell me—"

"I will not!—leave me!" she said, with an imperious stamp of her foot. "And take this parting piece of advice with you. Forget what has passed this evening, as I will endeavor, also, to do. Forget there is such a person as the girl, Jacquetta, and think of me only as the boy, Jack De Vere. There—go!"

She held out her arm toward the door, and kept it in that position until he was gone, angrily and haughtily. And for an hour after that, she passed to and fro, up and down the room, without stopping once, with eyes so full of dark, bitter gloom, that you would hardly have known her for the gay, laughing fairy of Fontelle Hall. She went over, at last, and leaned wearily against the mantel, and looked in the fire burning on the marble hearth. Long and intently she gazed in the glowing coals, as

though some dark picture had arisen there before her. Was that vision anything like that of Old Grizzle Howlet's of the inn! Did she see the foul gulf and the prostrate form lying in the slime at the bottom—lying at *his* feet, too? Something dark it must have been; for she drew a long, shivering breath, as she turned away, with a weary step and a paling cheek.

The sound of pleasant voices and gay laughter greeted the ears of Disbrowe an hour or so later, when he ascended to the parlor for the evening meal, and fell on his angry heart like vinegar upon niter. All the family were assembled there. Mr. De Vere sat in his arm-chair beside a couch, on which reclined the boy Jacinto, with whom he was gayly chatting. Somewhat paler and thinner than he had seen him last was Jacinto, but as handsome as ever, and looking wonderfully interesting, with his arm in a sling. On the hearth-rug beside him sat Jacquetta, laughing as merrily as though care or anger were to her words without meaning. Frank was leaning over the back of the couch, enjoying the fun, and Lady Augusta—the very image of a marble Niobe—sat near, with her pale face bent on her hand.

Disbrowe at once advanced to where the boy lay, and hurriedly began some words of thanks for what he termed his "brave conduct" and "generous heroism" in risking his life for a stranger, until the boy's full face flushed with embarrassment, and he shrunk away, as if in avoidance of the subject. Jacquetta saw his natural confusion, and came to his relief.

"There, there, Cousin Alfred, that will do; he'll imagine the rest, and it will spare your eloquence and your pathos. Here comes Tribula with the tea-urn; so come, Master Jacinto, and sit here beside me; and if you are as hungry as I am, you will do justice to those delicious rice waffles and oyster patties I see there."

Disbrowe bowed coldly, and took his place. All the evening Jacquetta was in the highest possible spirits, and the best possible looks. There was a streaming brilliancy in her eyes, a feverish flush on her cheeks, and her round, white, polished forehead looked pure and marble-like by the contrast. Her short, red curls flashed and shone like



rings of flame, and there was a buoyant lightness in her step, a clear, joyous ring in her voice, that angered one there present, until, for the moment, he felt as if he hated her for it. Never had her hands flown so easily or so brilliantly over the polished keys of the piano, entrancing one and all ; and never had her voice rung out so clear and sweet as it did that night. Song after song flowed from her lips, as though she was inspired. And, wilful, wayward, unaccountable girl that she was, she sung, without being asked, all the old English songs she knew Disbrowe liked, as he had never heard them sung before. There was a depth of pathos and passionate tenderness in her voice, as she sung, 'Come back, to me, Douglas, tender and true,' that made the song a very wail of despair—a cry of anguish from a broken heart, so full of hopeless love, strong as death, and Disbrowe sat with his face averted, still, dark, voiceless and motionless. A sob broke the silence before she ceased, from the Spanish boy, Jacinto.

"What! has that old Scotch song brought tears to your eyes?" said Jacquetta, with a laugh. "What a thing it is to have a tender heart. No doubt the Scotch lassie forgot her darling Douglas a week after, and took up with the first Sandie that came along!"

"What an opinion you have of your sex, Flibertigibbet," said Mr. De Vere. "Wait until you get a 'Douglas' of your own, and see if you will not be as silly and love-sick as any Scotch lassie that ever tripped the heather."

"How do you know I have not got one now, papa?" said Jacquetta, with a careless laugh. "There never yet was a girl who reached the age of twenty without losing her heart a score of times."

"Well, whoever got yours, Jack, I wish him joy of it," said Frank, with a shrug.

"So you may! He'll need all your good wishes, poor fellow. It's a sort of a bottle-imp, dangerous alike to buyer and owner. Why, what on earth is that?"

The sound of an altercation in the hall reached their ears, and then a shrill, childish, imperious voice was heard.

"I will go in—I tell you! I'll go in, in spite of you. Let go—will you?"

Jacquetta flung open the door; and, to the amazement of all, the little elf, Orrie Howlet, ran in—her black hair streaming about her—her black eyes bright with an angry light. She gave a quick glance round the room, until she beheld Disbrowe; and then, with a cry of delight, she darted over and sprung into his arms.

"I knew you were here; but that horrid old woman didn't want to let me in. Don't you let her get me."

"If you please, 'm," said Tribulation, a hard-visaged, stern-looking, elderly woman, "she would come in, you know."

"There! never mind. It's all right, Tribulation," said Jacquetta, closing the door.

"Who, in the name of all the kelpies, is this?" exclaimed Mr. De Vere, while Augusta and Jacinto *looked* the wonder they did not speak.

The child, who had clasped Disbrowe round the neck, glanced over her shoulder, and composedly said:

"Oh, Orrie Howlet! you know! Old Grizzle's little girl! You needn't be scared."

Jacquetta and Disbrowe laughed, partly at the little one's imperturbable gravity, and partly at Mr. De Vere's consternation.

"What in the world brought you here to-night, Orrie?" said Disbrowe, who was half-amused and half-affected by the little one's strange love for himself.

"Why, to see you! I said I would come, you know! You won't send me away—will you?" she said, looking up earnestly in his handsome, smiling face.

"Not if Mr. De Vere will let you stay. And so you came all the way from the inn to see me—did you, Orrie?"

"Oh, yes!" said Orrie, clinging closer to him.

"Does Old Grizzle know?"

"No; I guess she don't," said Orrie, with one of her short, shrill laughs. "Oh! won't she be mad when she finds out?"

"Will she beat you?"

"Be sure she will!" said Orrie, complacently. "Oh!

won't she, though! But I don't care. I have seen you you know, and she can't beat that away!"

"My dear child," said Disbrowe, touched by her look and tone, "if I had known you cared so much for seeing me, I should have ridden over to the inn. I would not have you get punished for me."

"Would you be sorry?" said the little one, opening her eyes.

"Yes, very."

"And you like me, too?"

"Very much, my dear little girl. It is something to be loved in this world as you love me!"

There was such sorrowful bitterness in his tone, that Orrie's black eyes opened wider than ever. A small, white hand fell softly on his, and with it fell a bright drop.

"Why, I declare," said Orrie, in the utmost surprise, "if Miss Jack ain't a-cryin'!"

Jacquetta stooped down, and impulsively touched her lips to those that had so lately kissed Disbrowe, with the involuntary cry:

"Oh, Orrie! love me, too! Dear little Orrie, love me, too!"

Orrie gave her one of her impulsive hugs and kisses, scanning her curiously meanwhile, and then she asked:

"But you were cryin', weren't you? What made you cry."

"Me! Nonsense, Orrie! I wasn't crying!" said Jacquetta, with a gay laugh.

"Oh, I thought you were," said Orrie, apparently relieved. "I hate to see people cry. Oh, there's Frank!—I must go and see him," said the elf, springing from Disbrowe's arms, and running over to Frank.

Looking down at the same moment, Jacquetta caught the dark, bright, handsome eyes of Disbrowe fixed full upon her, and colored to the temples. With an impatient gesture, she turned away, and seated herself on a low ottoman, at Jacinto's feet.

Orrie had sprung into Frank's arms, and was clinging to him in her cat-like fashion, while Frank's countenance maintained an expression of haughty dignity.

"No, you needn't kiss me, Miss Howlet. And you had better get down off my knee, and go back to that big monster over there. If you like him so much better than me, you ought to stay with him."

"Why, you ain't mad—are you?" said Orrie, giving him a shake.

"Yes; I am mad, Miss Howlet! and a good deal jealous, too. Before he came bothering along, and cutting me out, I used to come in for all your kissing and loving; and now I have to play second fiddle, and hardly get noticed at that. It's a shame, Miss Howlet; it's a confounded shame; yes, an abominable shame, Miss Howlet: and I wonder how you can look me in the face. I never expected such treatment from you—and I never could have believed it, so I couldn't!"

And Frank wiped away an imaginary tear, with his uncle's handkerchief, of which he had just picked his pocket.

"Well, there!—don't cry!" said Orrie, giving him a penitent squeeze. "I didn't do it—I mean I didn't go for to do it; and I do like you ever so much; but then, you know he's real nice, and I have to like him, too. Don't you like him?"

"No; I don't! I hate him—an unfeeling, bloodthirsty monster!" said Frank, with a ferocious howl. "I'll shoot him. I'll assassinate him. I'll blow his brains out with the first loaded crowbar I can find—so I will!"

Instantly Orrie was off his knee; her black eyes flashing, and her small fist clenched.

"He ain't a monster, you great big story-teller, you! You're a monster yourself! And if you shoot him, I'll shoot you—mind if I don't!"

"Hallo! What's all this?" said Mr. De Vere, looking up. "Quarreling already? What a little spitfire it is!"

"It ain't me—it's him! Calling people names as he has no business to! I wish you would speak to him, and make him stop."

"Now, Frank, don't tease the child. Why can't you let her alone?"

"Well, I am letting her alone. I never touched her," said Frank.



"Why, Augusta," said Jacquetta, suddenly, "what do you see so wonderful about the child? You have been looking at her so intently for the last five minutes."

"Don't you see it?" said Augusta, with a look of transient interest in her heavy eyes.

"See what?"

"The resemblance to—"

"I see it! I noticed it from the first!" said Jacinto, eagerly.

"To whom?" said Mr. De Vere, while a slight paleness overspread the face of Jacquetta.

"To Jacquetta," replied both together.

"To Jacquetta? Bless my soul!" said Mr. De Vere. "Come here, little girl, until I see you."

Orrie walked over with imperturbable composure, and stood gravely before him. Mr. De Vere put his finger under her chin, tipped up her face, and looked at her, while the bright, black eyes met his, unflinchingly.

"Pooh! She doesn't look like Jack!" said Mr. De Vere, contemptuously. "She has black eyes and black hair."

"While I am gray-eyed and red-haired!" broke in Jacquetta, with a laugh.

"And she is as dark as a gypsy; while Jack is fair. Pooh! pooh! Where are your eyes, all of you? Do you think she looks like you, Jack?"

"I confess I cannot see the resemblance, papa."

"The likeness is not so much in feature as in expression," said Augusta. "I did not notice it until Frank angered her, and then the look was exactly the same."

"So it all was," said Frank. "Come to think of it, she did look like Jack that time, in one of her tantrums!"

"I have observed it, too!" said Disbrowe. "It is one of those accidental likenesses we sometimes see in strangers, and that puzzles us so. I have known similar cases several times."

"It appears Miss Orrie is not the only one I look like, according to you, Captain Disbrowe!" laughed Jacquetta, "since I am a miniature edition of Captain Nick Tempest, too. Now I can understand how I look like him; but I

confess I am at a loss to trace a resemblance between myself and this dark little fairy here."

"Is she going to stay here all night?" said Mr. De Vere.

"Yes; I suppose so. Come here, Orrie; will you sleep with me to-night?" said Jacquetta.

Orrie nodded assent, and yawned.

"That's one go-to-bed," said Frank. "She'll be asleep, presently, if you don't take her off. I rather think I will turn in myself, too," he added, getting up.

As it was already late, this was a signal for all to disperse; and Orrie having given Disbrowe a parting embrace, and informed him he was to see her home the next day, was led off by Jacquetta to her own room.

Disbrowe reached his pleasant chamber; drew up a chair before the fire; lit his cigar, and with his soul in slippers, prepared to take life easy. Lost in thought, hours passed unheeded, until he was suddenly brought to his feet with a bound, by a sound familiar enough now. It was the strange, far-off, eerie music, rising and falling faintly and sweetly on the midnight air.

Instantly a determination to get at the bottom of this mystery entered the head of Captain Disbrowe. Curiosity was strong within him; but that was not the chief impulse that sent him off. It was Jacquetta's connection with the singular affair. Anything concerning her concerned him now; and determined to discover what hidden skeleton, what Bluebeard's chamber Fontelle Hall contained, he was down-stairs, through the hall, and standing alone in the clear moonlight almost in an instant.

That there was some other entrance to this north wing he was convinced; and find it he was determined, if he had to search until morning. The night was almost as clear as day; the moon rose clear and full in the heavens, and cast fantastic shadows around the stately pile. He glanced up, and saw the whole house enveloped in darkness, save a light that streamed redly from one window—from Augusta's window he knew. She, then, was up yet. What was she doing? Could it really be sleepless remorse for some "unacted crime" that preyed on her

mind, wearing her to a skeleton, and making her the living petrification she was? She herself had acknowledged that it was; but that very acknowledgment, if nothing else, would have made Disbrowe doubt it.

There were several massive doors in this north wing, and little difficulty in discovering them; but the thing was to open them. Stiff with rain and storm, and long neglect, they were almost as solid as the wall itself, and he soon gave up all hope of effecting an entrance by means of them. He fancied that down amid the ivy there might be some aperture in the ruined walls, large enough to permit his entrance. And in this hope he was not disappointed. Hidden among the clustering vines was what had once been an outer entrance into a sort of cellar, the door of which was now completely broken off. Wrenching away the ivy, Disbrowe passed in, and discovered a flight of stone steps at one end, leading evidently to the upper room. He ascended, and found himself in a large, echoing, desolate-looking apartment, with oak wainscoting, and niches in the wall that had once held statues, but were hung with cobwebs now. Through the high, narrow, diamond-framed windows, with their leaden casements, the pale moonlight shone brightly, casting a sort of ghostly glare around the dark, desolate room. And still the music rose and fell, and swelled and died away in fitful gusts, seemingly near at hand. Following the sound, he was about to pass through the room into the next, when an unexpected sound struck his ear, and caused him to fall back with a guilty start, as if he had been caught in some unworthy act.

It was a sound of voices in the room he was about to enter—familiar voices, too, speaking in suppressed but passionate tones. Both voices were recognized in an instant as those of Jacquetta and old Grizzle Howlet.

It was rather a startling interruption to his nocturnal search. Hitherto he had scarcely thought of it; but now it struck him as a base return of his uncle's hospitality, this attempting to pry into the secrets of his household. He turned hastily to descend the stairs and escape; but before he could reach them, the sound of their rapidly-advancing footsteps made him turn round and seek some

nearer place of concealment. The door of a small closet stood ajar; and darting in here, he softly closed it, just as Jacquetta and old Grizzle entered the room.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### UNMASKED.

“Break, break, break !

At the foot of thy crags, oh sea ;

But the tender grace of a day that is dead

Will never come back to me.”

—TENNYSON.

ONE moment later, and the Honorable Captain Disbrowe would have been discovered, and the very thought made his heart throb and a sudden heat flush into his face in the shelter of his retreat. He could fancy the mingled scorn and angry surprise in the clear, bright eyes of Jacquetta, at beholding him there ; and he would sooner have encountered a legion of ghosts, singlehanded, at that moment, than the little gray-eyed girl he could lift with one hand. Even now he was hardly safe—for the door stood ajar, and he dared not touch it lest it should creak ; he scarcely ventured to breathe, as he stood there, waiting for them to pass on.

But pass on they did not. To his dismay and consternation, Jacquetta came over and stood beside the window, looking out. The window was within a yard of his hiding-place, and her face was turned directly toward him—that face, so changed again, that he hardly knew it. Scorn, hatred, passion and loathing struggled for mastery there, and her eyes looked fierce and glittering in the serene moonlight. One small hand was tightly clenched, and her lips were compressed with a look of hard, bitter endurance.

Old Grizzle was speaking, as they entered, in a tone of jibing mockery.

“So you come here often, do you, Jacquetta ?” she was saying. “It must be very pleasant for you all to be serenaded night after night in this way. Listen ! a sweet strain that—was it not, Jacquetta ?”



"May it deafen you forever, as you hear it!" said Jacquetta, fiercely.

"Nay, Jacquetta—that is hardly courteous. Let me see—how long since you and I stood here before, listening to this same weird music, in this same goblin room?"

Jacquetta made a passionate gesture, as if to silence her, but spoke not.

"You have not forgotten, my little dear, have you?" sneered Grizzle.

"Forgotten!" exclaimed Jacquetta, with passionate solemnity. "Oh, my God! is there a moment, sleeping or waking, night or day, that I can forget? Oh, for the waters of Lethe to wash from my memory the crimson stain of that day in my lost, darkened, ruined childhood. Oh, my blighted life! my seared heart! my crazed brain! Forgotten!"

She struck her clenched hand on her breast, and the dark, passionate solemnity of her face was awe-striking in the cold, pale moon-rays.

"Have I not striven to forget? Have I not tried night and day? Have I not resolutely steeled my heart, closed my brain, to everything that could recall the terrible wrong done me in my childhood? *Childhood!* Why do I speak of it? I, who know not the meaning of the word—who never was a child—who, at the age of fourteen, when other children are thinking of their dolls and picture-books, was—"

"*What?*" said Grizzle, with a bitter sneer. "Why do you pause?"

"Before I knew the meaning of the word Memory," continued Jacquetta, her face white even to the lips, "I was happy. *You* know the sort of child I was—the happiest, merriest, giddiest fairy that ever danced in the moonlight. Oh, Grizzle Howlet! oh, woman with a fiend's heart! what had I done to you that this living death was to be mine?"

"Come, come, Jacquetta! this is going too far. Indeed, I think you ought to be grateful to me and your—"

"Name her not!" cried Jacquetta, fiercely, "if you do not want to arouse the demon that is within me—that you have seen aroused before now! Since I have learned

what it is to remember, my whole life has been one continued effort to *forget* ! I am not made of steel or stone, and I tell you to take care ! for, as sure as Heaven hears us this night, a day of retribution will come, and I will be avenged ! ”

“ Let it come ! ” said Grizzle, scornfully. “ It is not such as you, Jack De Vere, will ever make me blanch.”

“ *You* know,” said Jacquetta, with passionate vehemence, “ the living lie I am ! You know the mark I have to wear that others forged for me, and that I *must* wear till death releases me ! Am I to be held accountable for the sins of others—for your crime and *hers*, whose name, if I mentioned, I should be tempted to curse ? Will God judge me for what others have done ? Woman, I tell you—No ! At the great day, when He will come to judge the quick and dead, I will stand before his throne to accuse you ! ”

“ And your—”

“ Dare to name her ! ” almost screamed Jacquetta, with a fierce stamp of her foot, “ and I will hunt the very dogs of Fontelle on you, to tear you limb from limb ! ”

“ Come, my young madam ! ” said Grizzle, nowise intimidated, “ enough of this ranting ! I came for my little girl, and I must have her. You refused to give her to me out there, and I followed you here. Refuse to give her to me here, and I will follow you to your room, and take her by force ! ”

“ *Your* little girl ? ” said Jacquetta, scornfully ; “ as well might a dove call a wolf mother. That child is nothing to you ! ”

“ Isn’t she ? ” said Grizzle, with a peculiar laugh. “ Who do you suppose she is, then ? I should hope she is as much to me as to you.”

“ I do not know who she is ; if I did, she would not remain long with you. But I will discover, and free her from your fangs.”

“ Try, if you dare ! ” said Grizzle, defiantly. “ Try it at your peril ! It will be the darkest day that will ever dawn for you, Jacquetta De Vere, the day you discover who that child is ! ”

"For me?" said Jacquetta, bitterly. "Does a day ever rise for me that is not dark? Don't think I am afraid of you, Grizzle—that day has gone by. You have done your worst!"

"Have I?" said Grizzle. "That remains to be seen. I have not forgiven you for your jibes and taunts yet, nor for the scornful contempt with which you treated my son Christopher, when he did you the honor, and made a fool of himself, by loving you. Don't think I either forgive or forget so easily, my little lady. Did I not tell you once, a day would come when your own flinty heart would melt to quivering flesh? Have you ever read, in a certain nameless book, what it is to 'seethe a kid in its mother's milk'? Well, my fierce little eaglet, such a fate is in reserve for you."

"What a pity you ever left the stage, Grizzle!" said Jacquetta, with a smile of withering contempt. "You would be an honor to the profession yet. A speech like that would make your fortune!"

"I am on as tragic a stage just now, in real life, as ever I was in mimic one!" said Grizzle; "and as dark a tragedy is enacting. Do you think I am blind, dumb and besotted? Do you suppose I do not know what young girls are? I say, Jacquetta," she said, with a short, harsh laugh, "what a pleasant thing it is to have a handsome, dashing young officer in lonesome old Fontelle!"

A streak of dark red flashed across the face of Jacquetta, and then faded out, leaving her, even to the lips, of a more ashy paleness than before.

"Oh, the vanity of these puppets, who think they can outwit me!" said Grizzle. "I, who can read human hearts like open books. I tell you, Jack De Vere, I thanked God, for the first time in a score of years, when I heard who this young officer was, and where he was going. I left you to him from that moment; I left his hand to send the bolt that was to pierce your haughty heart! And that bolt has been sped; and you, in whom it is a crime to love, love him—the man who despises you! For—I tell you again—that proud young Englishman would not marry you to-morrow, if you would consent and he were free—which he is not. You know it; and now let

you learn in darkest despair, the lesson you taught my son—what it is to love in vain!”

“Your son?” said Jacquetta, with passionate scorn. “You do well to mention his name and love in the same breath. A great, stupid boor—a savage, remorseless cut-throat, a fit companion for the pirate, and slaver, and outlaw, Captain Nick Tempest. Oh, yes! wonderful love was his!”

“Take care how you talk of Captain Tempest, my dear,” said Grizzle, with a sneer. “Don’t say anything against him until you know who he is. Did you ever hear any one say you looked like him, my red-haired beauty?”

“We did not come here to talk of Captain Tempest, did we?” said Jacquetta, with a gesture of angry impatience. “What do I care for him or you either?”

“Well, the day is at hand when you will care for both of us. That is one consolation. The day when this dashing soldier—this haughtiest of haughty De Veres—will learn who it is he has stooped to love—*what* it is who bears his proud name. His cousin, forsooth!”

And she laughed mockingly.

The white face of Jacquetta grew a shade whiter, and she drew a long, hard, quivering breath.

“Ah! you *can* feel—you *can* suffer! Good! Do you not fear I will tell this scornful lover of yours? For he does love you, Jacquetta, with all his heart and soul, and, what is more, believes in you—this man whom you are night and day deceiving!”

She did not speak. She clasped both hands over her heart as thought it were breaking.

“Think how he would despise you—think how he would scorn you—think how he would loathe you, if he knew all! Oh, this glorious revenge of mine! Did I not do well to wait, Jacquetta? And my waiting will soon be over, and the day will soon be here now.”

Jacquetta turned from the window with a hard, mocking laugh.

“What if I forestall your communication, Grizzle? What if I tell him myself?”

“You would not dare to.”



"Would I not? Wait till to-morrow, and you will see."

"You would not dare to. I repeat it! Bold as you are, you have not courage for that!"

"Courage! You are the first who ever accused me of a lack of that article. I have courage enough to face a hungry lion just now, or a more ferocious animal still, Grizzle Howlet!"

"Oh! I don't call you a coward! You would not be your father's daughter if you were that. And mind, I am not speaking of Mr. Robert De Vere now. But the courage that would make you face a raging lion is not strong enough to make you debase yourself in the eyes of the man you love!"

"You jump at conclusions too fast, Grizzle. In the first place, you have only your own surmise that I have been idiot enough to fall in love—and with him; and, secondly, it would not debase me in his eyes if he knew all this instant. There is no crime or disgrace connected with—none, at least, for me. The sin rests on your shoulders. I am only the sufferer."

"Why, then, is it so closely concealed? Why is it so completely hidden from him? Does not that very secrecy betoken guilt? Doubtless he has heard this same music that at present is charming us, and wondered at it. Perhaps he has even inquired what it meant."

"He has."

"And what did you tell him?"

"What do you think I told him? What was there for me to tell? I laughed at the notion!"

"And left the secret for me. Thank you, Jacquetta. Oh! for the day when all shall be revealed, and he will know the thing he has been loving!"

"Let it come!" said Jacquetta, striking her clenched hand on the window-sill. "What do I care? One thing is, you had better look to yourself if you do, lest Mr. De Vere should suddenly remember he is a magistrate, and you are a murderess!"

"I don't fear him, thanks to his haughty daughter, Augusta. I have her head under my heel, and can crush it when I please."

"You hold her by some imaginary power. Augusta De Vere would not stoop to commit a crime to save her life."

"That's as may be. My power over her is strong enough to keep me from all fears on that score ; and however imaginary it may be, it is a terrible reality in your case."

"How do you know I will not turn informer ? There are cells and chains enough in Green Creek to bind Grizzle Howlet, and rope enough to silence her poisonous tongue."

"I defy you ! Before the rope could silence me, Augusta De Vere would be a corpse. Mind ! I make no idle threat ; but her secret once breathed, and she would not survive an hour."

"Better a speedy release from your tyranny than this slow eating away of life, you hideous vampire ! She is fading away now like the waning moon ; and before another year will be in her grave, and you will have a second murder to answer for !"

"That is my own look-out. It is nothing to you ! And, in spite of all your vaunting, you have no more intention of doing it, than I have of strangling you this instant where you stand !"

"Better for me you would—oh, better, better for me you would !" cried Jacquetta, wringing her hands.

"I know that ; but I am not idiot enough to forego my revenge in such fashion ! When the time comes, you will fall from your shaking pedestal—be hurled back to the slime whence you emerged—a mark for the finger of scorn to point at. What will high-spirited, bold-hearted Jack De Vere do then ?" said Grizzle, with a sardonic sneer.

"She can, like Cæsar, cover her face, and die with dignity, if need be. You may alienate one—him of whom you speak ; but I will still have an honored home in Fontelle Hall."

"Will you ? That remains to be seen ! What would you say if I should tell you you would be cast out into scorn and contumely from their gates, despised and abhorred by all, from the master of Fontelle to the lowest menial in the kitchen ?"

"I should call it what it is—a lie!"

"It is the truth, as you will find when the day comes. Oh, for that day! I will never see the sun rise till it dawns—that blessed day that will find you a beggared, disgraced, homeless outcast!"

"Do your worst. I defy you!"

"You will change your tune before long. Oh! you don't know Grizzle Howlet yet, I see, or the doom that is gathering over your head. Wait!"

"I intend to, and will brave you to your face when it comes!" said Jacquetta, with a short, mocking laugh.

"Yes, you may laugh now; but, in the end, let those laugh who win. You think now you could bear the disgrace; and perhaps, if Mr. De Vere and Augusta alone were concerned, you might: but this fine young stranger (ah, mention *him*, and you wince), how will you bear his scorn, and contempt, and hatred?—no, not hatred; for he will loathe you too much to stoop to hate!"

"Let him! He is nothing to me!"

"Very true—he is another's; yet you have given him your whole heart. And what has he given you in return?"

"His love!" said Jacquetta, with a bright, fierce flash of her eyes.

"Ah! he has told you so, and you believe him. Perhaps he believes it himself now; and if so, it is all the better, for it will make him loathe you all the more by-and-by."

"Speak no more of him. I will not listen," said Jacquetta, clasping both hands, with the same involuntary motion, over her heart.

"Oblige me by doing so a moment longer. What will Mr. De Vere say when he finds his pretty daughter, Jacquetta, has listened to this illicit love, and returned it; she, the—"

"Peace!" shrieked Jacquetta, with a frenzied stamp of her foot. "Do you want to drive me mad?"

"By no means! I should be very sorry for such a catastrophe, as it would defeat all my plans. And now, as you wish it, to change the subject. What do you think of this handsome Spanish boy, brought over by Captain Nick Tempest?"

"What I please."

"And what do you please to think, my dear young lady? Do be a little more communicative! Extremely handsome—is he not, *for a boy?*"

"So you say."

"But I want your opinion."

"You *will* want it, then."

"There is no danger of your falling in love with him, I trust," sneered Grizzle.

"I shall, if I choose."

"Not much danger of your choosing to do so, I fancy," said Grizzle, with a contemptuous laugh. "What does our handsome English cousin think of him?"

"Ask him."

"Perhaps I shall. I want to consult him also about Norma. Have you ever heard the name before, Jacquetta?"

"What would you give to know?"

"And be nothing the wiser," added Grizzle, with another low, sardonic laugh. "Short and sweet! I thought, perhaps, Captain Disbrowe might have mentioned the name in his declaration of love. It is rather an unusual one."

"Is it?"

"Ask Master Jacinto what he thinks of it."

"I shall leave that for you to do along with the rest."

"Very well. I am equal to a Spanish boy, or any other emergency. Singular, is it not, that he should risk his life for a complete stranger he never saw before?"

"You say so."

"And more singular still, that the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe should be stone-blind. What says the old song, Jacquetta? 'What will not woman when she loves!' Take care Captain Disbrowe is not jealous."

"Did you follow me here to moralize on love? How much longer am I to be kept here listening to this trash? Are you near done?"

"I am done for the present. I will go when you give me the child."

"Can you not wait until to-morrow? Is she to be taken



from her bed at this hour of the night to start on such a cold, weary journey ? ”

“ Yes. It will teach her a lesson, the young imp. I will learn her what it is to run away from home when I get hold of her ! ”

“ Dare to touch her—lay but one finger roughly on her, and, as Heaven hears me, I will go to Green Creek that very hour and tell the world what you are, even if I should swing beside you ! ”

There was something so appallingly fierce in the young girl’s tone, in her bright, glittering eyes, and colorless face, that it cowed for the first time the she-fiend before her ; and muttering an inaudible something, she was silent.

“ You know what I came here for—you know the errand I have so often to perform—that I must perform before I can return with you. Will you stay here, or do you choose to accompany me and look on your work ? ”

“ No,” said the woman, in a hoarse whisper. “ Not in there—I cannot go ! I will stay here till you come back ; but be quick.”

With a look of scornful contempt, Jacquetta turned and left the room—passing in the direction whence the weird music still came. An instant after it ceased—not a sound was to be heard ; the silence of the grave reigned through the lonely room.

Old Grizzle came over to the window where Jacquetta had stood and looked out, glancing now and then in something like fear in the direction the other had gone, and then shrinking closer toward the light. Before ten minutes had elapsed, Jacquetta’s light, quick, footstep was heard, and her voice broke the deep stillness, saying coldly :

“ I am ready—come now.”

Grizzle followed her across the room. There was the sound of a key turning in a rusty lock, then the door was closed and locked again, and the next instant Captain Alfred Disbrowe was alone in the desolate room.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## PRIDE AND PASSION.

"I know not—I ask not  
If guilt's in thy heart ;  
I but know that I love thee,  
Whatever thou art."

—MOORE.

WHAT Captain Disbrowe's feelings were while listening to the singular conversation in his hiding-place, may be, to use the handy old phrase, "easier imagined than described."

As he stepped out from his retreat, his face might have rivaled Jacquetta's own in its extreme pallor. And certainly he had heard enough to make him even as cold and marble-like as he was now.

To love Jack De Vere was bad enough, to love her while engaged to another was worse ; to love her knowing her enveloped in some dark mystery of guilt or disgrace, worst of all.

And yet, strange perversity of passion, never had he loved her as he did at that moment. Standing there alone, his arms folded over his chest, motionless as a statue, her image rose before him "a dancing shape, an image gay," radiant with youth and health, and happiness, and beauty ; bewildering, entrancing, intoxicating. There are some who never appear in full beauty until some strong passion of love, or hatred or anger rouses them to new life, and Jacquetta was one of them. He had seen her in a new phase to-night, as she stood there with blazing eyes and scornful lips, her small, delicate figure drawn up to its full height, a little living flame of fire, and never had she looked so really beautiful. He had seen her often in her gay, sparkling moods and in her grave and angry ones, too ; but this—this was something new.

So, nearly an hour he stood there so lost in thought, that he heeded not the flight of time. Jacquetta ! Jacquetta ! Jacquetta ! was the cry of his heart still ; and in that moment he felt as if he could have taken her in

his arms and shielded her against all the world. One truth was thrilling through his whole being in fierce shocks of joy. He loved Jacquetta—Jacquetta loved him!

From his trance—a trance every unfortunate lover has fallen into more than once—he awoke, at last, to the hard reality of being very cold; and an unromantic vision of fevers, and agues, and rheumatic chills rising suddenly and unpleasantly before him, he turned to leave the uncomfortable old room. He paused a second to contemplate, with intense feelings of interest and curiosity, the doors, one at either end of the room—that toward the left being the one into which Jacquetta had passed to still the weird music; the other to the right being that which they had both entered last, and which he conjectured led to the inhabited parts of the house. Even had he desired to enter, he knew he could not, for Jacquetta had securely locked both; so, giving them a parting glance, he ran down the stone stairs and passed out of the aperture by which he had entered.

The hall-door remained as he had left it—proof positive that neither Jacquetta nor her companion had entered the house by its means. He softly locked it after him and then ascending the stairs, sought his room—not to sleep, but to pace up and down until morning should dawn.

Another sensation of wonder besides that relating to Jacquetta filled his mind. He had heard them mention Norma—what knew they of her? That both knew she had been his liege-lady while in England was evident; and that he felt convinced was the reason why Jacquetta had so scornfully and indignantly rejected him. What if he should give up this high-born *fiancée* of his?—what if he should offer to surrender wealth and rank, to brave the haughty anger of his relatives, and the scoffs and sneers of his aristocratic friends, all for her and love? Surely such a proof of devotion must awaken some return in her flinty breast; surely, then, he could conquer the conqueress, make the fierce young lioness crouch, cowed and tame at his feet. But had he courage for such a sacrifice—was she worth it? Some day, and most probably soon,

he would be Earl of Earnecliffe and Baron of Guilford ; and did he not owe something to the world and his high position ? And more, did he not owe a great deal to this lady betrothed of his at home ? True, he remembered the engagement had been none of his making, but that of Earnecliffe's and the lady's father, who wished to see the family united ; the former, because the lady was unexceptionable in beauty and family, and would have an immense dowry ; and the latter, because he wished his daughter, who, with all her wealth, was simply Miss Macdonald, to have a title and be a countess. But he himself had given a tacit consent. He had acquiesced nonchalantly enough when his brother informed him of it, and proceeded to woo the young lady, then a romantic school-girl, in true orthodox, gentlemanly fashion. He was, as he said himself, a poor devil of a younger brother, with expensive tastes and habits, and slightly extravagant, if the truth must be told ; and the income he derived from the earl was far inadequate to his expenses. True, he would be an earl himself some day, and one of the wealthiest peers of the realm ; but as he could not live on that hope, and as Earnecliffe, though suffering from a disease liable to carry him off at any moment, might still see fit to live a dozen years, he must have something to live on in the meantime. And Norma Macdonald's fortune was just the thing—her ten thousand a year would supply him with spending-money comfortably, pay his debts, keep him in pale ale and kid gloves, buy him a yacht at Cowes, let him own a horse at the Derby, and keep a dashing four-in-hand in town. It was just the thing for him—couldn't do better if he was to try ; which he was a great deal too indolent to do. So he closed with the offer and the lady at once.

It was rather a bore to be obliged to make love to her, to be sure—to fan her, and attend her to the opera and turn over her music when she played ; but these were necessary evils that every man had to suffer through, some time or other in his life, and he supposed he might as well make up his mind to be resigned, and begin at once. So he yawned, made himself fascinating, and set off to captivate Miss Norma Macdonald. And he succeeded to



perfection. Miss Norma fell violently in love with him, then and there—as he came pretty near doing the same with her, too. Surpassingly beautiful she was—the most superb specimen of the superb sex he had ever seen, even then, although she was not more than fifteen years of age. Her beauty was of a rare and singular sort, with large, dark, lustrous eyes and golden hair, a snowy complexion, and the most perfect of hands and feet. Romantic and impulsive she was in the extreme, had read no end of novels, and was quite ready to love the first tolerably handsome young man who came in her way, from a duke to Jeames the footman. And Captain Disbrowe, the dashing, handsome, gallant young guardsman, was just the one to captivate a susceptible heart of fifteen. She had heard stories of his princely extravagance, of his wild deeds, and the thousand and one scrapes he was constantly getting into; but few young ladies are disposed to like a man the less for such a reputation. Norma Macdonald certainly was not. And never was a scapegrace better loved than was the handsome young officer by her. His feelings toward her were an odd mixture. He was proud of her, that was certain: he knew she would one day be a star of the first magnitude in the world of beauty and fashion; that he would be envied by every man of his acquaintance when she would enter society; that she would make a sensation when presented at court; and would be an unrivaled Lady Earnecliffe, and do the honors of Disbrowe Park entrancingly. And was not that enough? He liked her well enough; he must marry somebody, and she was just the thing, in every respect. She loved him, too, which was another consideration, although he knew very well she would have loved Tom Vane or Lord Austrey, his fast friends, just the same, if they had entered the list first. As it was, she loved him with her whole heart, and him only; and being a little grateful, and a good deal proud, he felt, on the whole, perfectly satisfied with the arrangement. He did not love her, to be sure; but though he had flirted from the age of eighteen, when he had taken moonlight rambles through old Fontelle with the daughter of his father's steward, he had never entertained a *grande passion*

for anybody, and did not believe he was capable of it—did not desire any such thing, in fact ; it would be such a bore to be violently in love ! And so things were in this satisfactory state, and the course of true love was running as smooth as a mill-dam, when the young guardsman got a commission in a regiment ordered to Ireland, and led a gay life of it, for two or three years, alternately in that “beautiful city called Cork,” and the capital of the Emerald Isle, while Miss Norma was inspiring her mind and kissing the miniature of her dashing lover within the consecrated walls of a fashionable boarding-school. Then he returned to England, to avoid the consequences of some tremendous scrape he had got into in Dublin, saw his *chère amie*, who had grown a thousand times more beautiful than ever, and twice as much in love, from constantly thinking of her absent truant. Miss Norma’s papa, and the Honorable Alfred’s brother wished the marriage to take place on the young lady’s nineteenth birthday ; and the young lady and gentleman being willing enough, settlements were made, and everything got ready for the important occasion. And meantime, by way of a change, Captain Disbrowe took it into his erratic head that a good way to kill time would be to visit America, and hunt up his mother’s relatives, the De Veres—which he did to his cost, as the reader already knows.

All these things were passing in review through his mind, now. He had come, he had seen, and intended to conquer, and had been conquered instead, and by a little, gray-eyed, red-haired girl, ten degrees less beautiful than Norma Macdonald, who loved him, and whom he did not love—though that alone might account for it. He had been so long accustomed to easy conquests, that this defiant, free-and-easy Jersey witch provoked, piqued and interested him. Between being interested in a young lady and falling in love with her, there is but a step ; and before the Honorable Alfred knew he had begun, he was already past praying for. That he *could* entertain a *grande passion* he found to his cost—that life without Jack De Vere would be a miserable affair, not worth having, he found, too. But whether she took the same view of the case with regard to him, he was at a loss to know. He

would have given worlds to know how she discovered the secret of his engagement to Norma; for he was positive Earnecliffe had never told them, and he was equally positive that both she and old Grizzle Howlet knew of it. There was no accounting for it, except by the fact that one or both was a witch; and looking up at the smiling, mocking face on the wall, he felt half inclined to believe that *Jacquetta was one*.

What between pacing up and down his room for three mortal hours, and thinking with all his might, Captain Disbrowe succeeded in working himself up to a pretty high state of excitement at last. He was between the horns of a dilemma; he could not tell what to do. One moment, he resolved to cast wealth, and rank, and the world's opinion to the winds, and give up all for *Jacquetta*. The next, the terrible thought of "what will Mrs. Grundy say" staggered him; for though, in all probability, Captain Disbrowe had never heard of the lady, he dreaded her quite as much as you do, my dearest reader. How *could* he brave the anger of Lord Earnecliffe, and the haughty amaze and disdain of his wife, Lady Margaret, one of the proudest women he had ever known? If she were really a *De Vere*, which her looks and the strange conversation he had overheard seemed to contradict, she was his equal, at least, in birth; but how dare he—one of those mistakes of Nature, a younger brother—poor as a church-mouse, think for a moment of indulging in the luxury of marrying a penniless girl, simply because he was absurd enough to love her? Why, all London would laugh at him; and there is nothing a true-born Briton cannot stand, except being laughed at. And Norma—how was he to face her, when there was even a remote possibility of her dying of a broken heart, and a still greater possibility of her father, a regular Scotch fire-eater, following him over the world, from the Pyramids of Egypt to the wilds of New Jersey, to blow his brains out? And at that moment he half-wished some kind friend—Captain Tempest, for instance—would perform that act of mercy, if only to keep him from going distracted in his dilemma! There was another annoying little thought that would persist in intruding itself, too; if *Jacquetta* was not a *De Vere*, who

was she? what was she? Like all the rest, it was a question easier asked than answered, and like the rest, intensely disagreeable; but in the face of everything, one conviction was ever uppermost—that he loved Jacquetta as he never had loved before—never could love again.

“If I were Ned Brown, of the Guards, with his eight thousand a year, I would marry her to-morrow,” was his concluding exclamation. “What a deuce of a thing it is for a man to be tied up hand and foot, as I am, and not able to budge an inch to the right or left! Confound all aristocratic high and mighty relations, I say! and may the demon fly away with all match-making friends, forevermore! Amen. Oh, Jacquetta! I wish to Heaven I had tied a mill-stone to my neck and jumped into the Serpentine, the day I first took a notion to come to America. And I wish Miss Norma Macdonald and the noble earl of Earnecliffe were in—Coventry! I do!”

With this charitable apostrophe, Captain Disbrowe, becoming suddenly aware that the breakfast-bell had rung, went down-stairs, and encountered the object of all his thoughts and perplexity crossing the hall, laughing merrily with Jacinto, and looking bright, saucy and piquant as ever. Gayly saluting him, she fixed her eyes on his face, and exclaimed:

“Why, cousin Alf, what’s the matter? You look as if you had seen a ghost last night, or had an attack of the nightmare! Just look at him, Jacinto! What has happened, my dear cousin?”

“Nothing much. I have had bad dreams.”

“And bad dreams have been powerful enough to give that look to the face of the most high, puissant, and illustrious Captain Disbrowe? Whew? What were they about, cousin Alfred? I am a regular female edition of Joseph for interpreting dreams.”

“Well, they were of—you.”

“Indeed! Dear me, how flattered I feel! And what did you dream of me, coz?”

“That you and somebody else were plotting to be the death of me.”

“Possible? I shouldn’t wonder if it came true, too! Who was the other?”



He fixed his eyes keenly on her face.

"Old Grizzle Howlet!"

She started with a shock, and looked at him. He had expected she would, and met her gaze carelessly.

"Indeed! *indeed!*" she said, sharply. "Perhaps you also dreamed where this meeting took place?"

"Certainly. When I *do* dream, I always pay attention to it, and omit no detail. It was somewhere in an old, deserted room, I believe."

"Ah!" she said, with a paling cheek, and a rising fire in her eye. "Perhaps you can also tell me what we said?"

There was something so sharp, suspicious, and angry, in her tone, that Jacinto looked at her in extreme surprise.

"Why, Jacquetta!" he exclaimed.

Disbrowe's face flushed, and his eye flashed with a jealous fire. To hear this handsome boy call her Jacquetta so familiarly, to watch her as she leaned on his arm, as she had never consented to do on his, was galling in the extreme.

"What did we say?" repeated Jacquetta, imperiously.

"Really, Miss Jacquetta," he said, half-coldly, "one would think I was describing a reality instead of a dream. How can I tell what you said? Who can remember what is said in a dream?"

"Such a remarkable dream! you surely can," she said—two red spots, that only anger or deep excitement could ever call there, burning in either cheek.

"No; I cannot. And I do not see anything remarkable in your meeting the old lady," he said, in an indifferent tone.

"Nor in our plotting to murder you—stranger things have happened. Are you sure you locked your chamber-door last night on retiring, Captain Disbrowe?"

"A singular question; but, yes, I rather think I did."

"And you are not given to walking in your sleep, occasionally?"

"In my sleep? No, never." And he looked at her with a peculiar smile.

Jacinto laughed.

"Really, Jacquetta, one would think you were cross-examining him as if he were on trial for shoplifting. I shall be careful how I tell you what I dream."

Jacquetta, with her eyes fixed on Disbrowe's face, and a strange glitter in their lustrous depths, drew a long, hard breath, and said nothing. *His* eyes were fixed curiously on Jacinto—*that laugh!* surely it was not the first time he had heard it. Jacinto noticed his look, and colored slightly through his brown skin.

"Well," he said, half-annoyed, half-laughing, "is it my turn next?"

"Do you know," said Disbrowe, "I have the strangest idea that I have seen you somewhere before. But for your foreign accent, and your dark hair and complexion, I could swear you were—"

"Who?" said Jacinto, as he paused.

"You will laugh, but a lady I knew in England. You reminded me of her from the first, in some odd, unaccountable way, and your laugh—if I had not looked at you that time I could swear it was—"

"Norma!" laughed Jacquetta.

"By Jove! you've hit it! But what do you know of Norma?"

"I had a dream," said Jacquetta, with a malicious twinkle of her eye. "I dreamed Captain Disbrowe was to be married to a certain Miss Norma Macdonald when she would attain her nineteenth birthday, and that he only came to America to kill time during the tedious interval. Ahem! You see others can dream besides you, my good cousin."

Disbrowe stood fairly dumb with amazement, and his color came and went. Jacquetta's wicked eyes sparkled with triumph.

"I say!" called Frank, at this interesting juncture, thrusting out his head, through the parlor door, "do you mean to come to breakfast to-day, or are we all to starve in here, while you three talk scandal out there?"

"We weren't talking scandal, Frank, dear," said Jacquetta. "Captain Disbrowe and I were merely relating two singular dreams we had last night."

"Oh! you were—were you?" growled Frank. "A

pretty way that to spend the morning, and keep respectable Christians that don't believe in such heathenish things as dreams fasting in here, till they feel ravenous enough to eat a Quaker's grandmother. I'm surprised at you, Captain Disbrowe!" said Frank, thrusting his hands in his pockets, and speaking in a tone of grave rebuke, "a young person that's had you brought up, to believe in such superstition, which corrupts the mind, debases the constitution, undermines the morals, defiles the heart—there! come to breakfast!"

"Defiles the heart—come to breakfast! A pretty brace of subjects to string together," said Jacquetta. "Come, cousin Alf, it won't do, you perceive, to keep this hungry cousin of ours waiting any longer."

She passed her arm through Jacinto's, and went in, followed by Captain Disbrowe. If ever man was "taken aback," whatever that means, the Honorable Alfred was that man, at that moment; and if ever a man was in a fair way to be madly jealous, it was he likewise. It would have been a comfort to have taken this provokingly handsome, dark-eyed young foreigner, and pitched him neck and crop out of the front door; but even that small consolation was denied him. And in a frame of mind the reverse of seraphic, he took his place at the breakfast-table.

"Why, Jack!—I say Jack! where's little Orrie Howlet?" inquired Frank, in surprise.

"Gone," said Jacquetta, curtly.

"Gone!" echoed the young gentleman. "Where?"

"Home—to the inn!"

"Home! Go away! she couldn't go so early!"

"Has she really gone, Jack?" said Mr. De Vere, in surprise.

"Yes, sir."

"Why, when did she go?"

"Late last night—just before I retired. Old Grizzle came after her. Was that part of your dream, Cousin?"

Disbrowe smiled, and bowed slightly.

"Oh, she did—did she?" said Frank. "How did she like that?"

"She didn't like it at all. She would have preferred

remaining until morning, and being escorted home by Captain Disbrowe, for whom she has evidently conceived a rash and inordinate attachment."

"Which I hope you return, Alfred," said Mr. De Vere, smiling.

"Certainly, sir. You don't think I could be ungallant enough to refuse so slight a favor to a young lady."

"And so you make a point of loving every girl who chooses to take a fancy to you."

"Undoubtedly!"

"Really, now! how excessively kind of you!" exclaimed Jacquetta. "And how many girls have the good taste to love you annually, Captain Disbrowe?"

"I regret I cannot tell you—I never was a proficient in complex arithmetic."

"Poor little Orrie!" said Frank. "It was a shame to take her off. I wonder she went at all."

"Unfortunately she had no choice in the matter. But don't distress yourself, Francis, my son, she wasn't at all anxious about you; but was in the deepest distress at being forced away without seeing our lady-killing cousin here. In fact, we had some difficulty in persuading her to go without paying a visit to his room, to give him a parting embrace; but our combined eloquence prevailed on her at last."

"Why did you not allow her? I should have been glad to see my little friend before she left," said Captain Disbrowe.

"You were dreaming about that time," said Jacquetta, dryly. "And I rather fancy if she had entered, she would have found an empty cage. Had you not better ride over to-day and return her visit?"

"Very likely I shall—if I can prevail on you to be my body-guard on that occasion. Remember you told me once, how dangerous it was for me to ride out unprotected in these savage regions."

"Poor child! so it is! Why, there is no telling but some tremendous New Jersey female might spring out from behind a tree, and unable, like all the rest of her sex, to resist the irresistible Captain Disbrowe, bear him off in his helpless innocence to—Oh! I tremble for you,



cousin! Think what your anxious brother would say when he heard of it?"

"Then to prevent such a terrific climax, will you consent to accompany and take care of me?"

"Well, there it is. I am sorry to disappoint you, but I should be a great deal more sorry to disappoint myself. Should be pleased to oblige you, cousin Alf, but you perceive I can't."

"Why not?"

"Well, I've got a previous and more pleasant engagement."

"Can you not break it? Make an act of self-denial, and come with me!"

"Oh, I couldn't think of such a thing—could I, Jacinto?"

Jacinto smiled, and was silent.

"Oh, if your engagement is with him—" began Disbrowe, coldly.

"That's it, you see it would be impossible to break one made with him. And he has promised to teach me Spanish; and we have got already as far as the verb *to love*!"

"With such a teacher it cannot have taken you long to reach that most interesting of all verbs," laughed Mr. De Vere.

Disbrowe's face had assumed a look of cold hauteur, and Jacquetta's eyes sparkled maliciously. A wicked reply was on her lips; but before she could speak, a sudden and most unexpected sound froze the words she would have uttered.

A low, soft strain of music, subdued and distant, yet perfectly clear and sweet, fell on the ears of all—that music Disbrowe so well knew.

In an instant Jacquetta was on her feet, deathly white, and with her hands clasped convulsively over her heart. Mr. De Vere, too, arose in consternation; and even Augusta, who had hitherto sat silent and stony, stood up, in evident agitation. Had a grenade suddenly exploded at their feet, it could not have produced a more instantaneous change than that low, sweet, plaintive strain. And Disbrowe saw—himself agitated, though he could scarcely tell why—that the eyes of her father and sister turned

on Jacquetta, in mingled terror and pity, as if she were the one most concerned.

There was an instant's silence, and then it arose again in a long, wailing sort of cry, dying out faint and sad. Without a word, Jacquetta started to leave the room.

"Jacquetta, my dear girl, do you think had I not better accompany you?" said Mr. De Vere, turning his agitated face toward her.

"No, no—I will go myself—remain where you are," she said, in a voice so like that of last night, that her image rose again before Disbrowe, as he had seen her then standing, white and stern, like a devouring flame, in the cold moonlight.

She was gone in an instant, and Mr. De Vere and Augusta resumed their seats, still so strangely and strongly agitated, and listening intently to catch every sound. Disbrowe looked resolutely in his plate to avoid meeting the eye of Frank; and the young Spaniard looked the intense wonder he did not venture to speak.

A long and embarrassing pause ensued—broken at last by Mr. De Vere, who asked, with an apparent effort, some trivial question of Disbrowe. The young guardsman responded; and seeing the evident distress of his uncle, strove to sustain the conversation, in which he was joined, for the first time, by Augusta, who seemed roused from her petrified state by the singular sound.

It was a relief to all when the meal was over. Mr. De Vere and his daughter immediately quitted the room, Jacinto sat on a low stool, and began drawing the ears of Jacquetta's fierce dog through his fingers. Frank, with his hands in his pockets, and an uneasy look in his eyes, went whistling up and down the room; and Disbrowe stood like a tall, dark statue at one of the windows—his arms folded over his breast, and an unusual look of dark gloom on his handsome face. Jacinto and Frank cast furtive glances toward him, and at last the latter spoke;

"I say, cousin Alfred."

"Well?" was the brief response.

"What a singular affair that!—wasn't it?"

"What?"

"Oh, bother! You know well enough! The music!"

There was no response.

"Never knew it to happen before, and I've been here since I was the size of that." And Master Frank held his hand about three inches from the ground. "Very odd!—excessively so!"

"Where did it come from?" asked Jacinto.

"Oh! from around somewhere," said Frank, giving himself an uneasy shrug. "It wasn't anything, you know!"

Jacinto smiled slightly, and returned to caressing the dog. Disbrowe turned round, and even the sight of the young Spaniard on such good terms with her favorite dog brought an irritated flush to his brow.

"I think of riding out this morning," he said, to Frank. "What do you say to coming with me?"

Frank, who had his own notions of hospitality, hesitated a moment and glanced at Jacinto. Disbrowe saw the look, and said, haughtily:

"I beg your pardon—I forgot. It will not be necessary." And he turned to leave.

"If Jacinto would come with us," said Frank, doubtfully.

"Oh! go with him. Don't mind me; I will do very well," said Jacinto, cordially.

"By no means," interposed Disbrowe, hurriedly. "Frank shall not commit such a breach of hospitality on my account. I will go alone."

Five minutes later, and he was in the saddle and away. Thinking of Jacquetta, and trying in vain to solve the riddle that perplexed him, he rode rapidly on, resolved to see little Orrie before he returned.

It was three hours nearly before the inn came in sight: and he remembered, with a strange mingling of feelings, the last night he had spent there. It was a gloomy-looking place—almost as foreboding in aspect as its mistress.

"I wonder what the dear old lady will think of this morning call from me?" soliloquized Disbrowe. "I fancy she will be surprised—rather! If anybody had told me, six months ago, when I thought it a bore to trot through Rotten Row of a sunshiny morning, I would take, to-day a gallop of over thirty miles, and all to see a little elf from goblin land—well, to draw it mild, I should say it was a

confounded lie! It must be something in the air, I think; or some of the dreadful energy of the natives of this new land has been, by some mysterious means, instilled into me. I wish Columbus and all his men had been scalped and devoured by the Indians the day he was so officious as to begin discovering continents, anyway!"

And with this second charitable wish, he sprung from his horse, and had raised his whip to knock at the door, when a scream of delight greeted his ear; and the next instant a pair of arms were around his neck, and little Orrie herself was kissing and clinging to him like a human crab.

"Oh, I knew you'd come! I knew you would! And I'm so glad!" she exclaimed, in tones of breathless delight. "I've been waiting for you all the morning. Why didn't you come earlier!"

"Well, unless I had started in the middle of the night, I don't see how I could!"

"I came in the middle of the night—did you know it?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Miss Jack told you. I wanted to see you, but Miss Jack wouldn't let me."

"What did she say?"

"Why, that you were asleep, and it would not look well to go and awaken you. And then she said she would tell you to come and see me to-day. Were you sorry when she said I was gone?"

"Very."

Orrie lowered her voice, and pointed to the house.

"It wasn't my fault, you know; she came for me, and I didn't want to go. But then, it's just like her. She's a horrid, ugly old thing, everyway you can fix it!"

"You little virago! did she make you walk?"

"Walk?" said Orrie, breaking into her short, shrill laugh. "I guess not! We rid-a-horseback—on old Dobbin, you know. Are you going in?"

"No, I think not. I am not particularly anxious to see the dear old soul! I came to see you."

"Did you?—that's so nice! And, oh, I do love you better than anybody else in the world!" cried Orrie, with another of her impulsive hugs and kisses.



"Thank you. I'm very much obliged; but, at the same time, I had rather not be strangled outright with these dreadful little arms of yours. Did she beat you when she got you home?"

"No; Old Nick was here, and he wouldn't let her. Only for him, I guess I'd have caught it!" said Orrie, with a chuckle.

"Ah! is he there now?"

"No; he and Kit and Blaize went away this morning. Do you know," said Orrie, lowering her voice again, "they were talking about you when I arrived?"

"Were they? What did they say?"

"Well, you know, I couldn't hear very well—I wasn't in the room, but listening at the door."

"Oh! a very commendable practice, which you ought to cultivate while you are young, as I fancy you have a talent that way. And they were taking my name in vain, were they?"

"They were talking about you!" said Orrie, looking a little puzzled, for one-half of the young gentleman's speeches were Greek to her or thereabouts; "and Captain Nick said he would kill you, if he was to swing for it the next moment. What did he mean by that?"

"Never mind! You will find out, probably, by experience, one of these days, if you live much longer with this amiable old lady of yours. What else did they say?"

"Why, old Grizzle laughed at him, and said she despised his notions of revenge. That killing was no good—or something like that—and that she knew a way to fix you off a thousand times worse!"

"Dear old soul!" said Disbrowe, apostrophizing her in a low voice. "What a blessed old lady she is, to be sure!"

"Then I heard old Nick ask her how; and she said to come to-morrow night—that's to-night, you know," said Orrie—"and she would tell him. And he wanted her to tell him then; and she got cross, and said she would not. And I heard her tell him another thing, too!" added the little one, suddenly—"something about Miss Jack."

"You did, eh? What was it, magpie?"

"Why, that she was going to kill two birds with one

stone—you and her. So you and Miss Jack had better look out!"

"Thank you. What particular virtue is there in looking out?"

"Now, don't be funny," said Orrie, impatiently. "I should think you ought to be scared to death. I should, I know."

"Well, I am too. What else did you hear?"

"Well—nothing else," said Orrie, reluctantly. "Old Grizzle jerked the door open before I knew it, and caught me there, and boxed my ears and sent me to bed. And that's all."

"And enough too, I think. I wish you could twist yourself into some corner and hear what precious revelations they will make to-night."

"Eh?" said Orrie.

"Oh, nothing! If you hear anything more, will you let me know?"

"Well, it's such a long piece to go to Fontelle," said Orrie, hesitatingly. "And old Grizzle does get so mad—though I don't care for that much—that—"

"Oh! I do not wish you to travel to Fontelle, my dear child," said Captain Disbrowe, smiling at her troubled little face. "Perhaps I may ride over again to-morrow and see you."

"Will you? Oh, how nice! And ain't Fontelle a beautiful place with such lovely big rooms, and nice pictures, and carpets, and splendid soft beds? Oh! I wish I lived there!" said Orrie, with sparkling eyes.

"Upon my honor I wish you did, Firefly! Perhaps you may some day. Shall I tell you how?"

"Yes!" said Orrie, eagerly.

"Then make Frank fall in love with you, and get married to him!" laughed Disbrowe.

Orrie put her finger on her lip, perched her head on one side, bird fashion, and looked reflective.

"Do you think I could?" she said, searchingly.

"Could what?" said Disbrowe.

"Go to live there if I got married to him?" said Orrie.

Disbrowe laughed, and nodded.

"Then I will!" said Orrie, decidedly.

"Will marry him?" said Disbrowe, still laughing.

"Yes!" said Orrie, soberly; "I shall. I'll ask him about it the next time I see him. Will you live there, too?"

"No; I am afraid not. I must go home shortly."

"Where is your home?"

"Oh! away over the sea—far away."

Orrie's countenance fell.

"I shan't like it, then. I had rather go with you. Couldn't I marry you, and go there too?"

Disbrowe laughed heartily.

"What are you laughing at!" said Orrie, sharply. "I don't see any thing to laugh at! Perhaps you are laughing at me!" she exclaimed, as the thought struck her for the first time.

"Laughing at you?" said Disbrowe, composing his countenance. "I hope I have better manners. No, indeed, Miss Orrie."

"Well, will you marry me, though?" said Orrie, curiously.

"It's very likely I shall," said Disbrowe, maintaining his gravity by an effort, "though I must refer you to papa! Oh! here comes the old witch of Endor herself. Good-by, Orrie. I'll think of your proposal."

And kissing the small face, upturned in all gravity for that pleasant operation, he set her down, sprung on Saladin, and galloped off, just as old Grizzle, in angry astonishment, came to the door.

Once out of sight, Disbrowe laughed until he could laugh no longer, over Orrie's unexpected proposal, and the solemn countenance with which she made it. Once or twice more unpleasant thoughts obtruded themselves; but, with his happy, careless nature, he set them aside, and galloped back in far better spirits and appetite than when he had left.

It was sometime in the afternoon when he reached Fontelle. Wishing to see his uncle for a moment, to discover if he had any message to send to Lord Earnecliffe, to whom he was about to write, he inquired after luncheon, where he was, and learned from Tribulation that he was

in the library, according to his custom ; "i' the afternoon."

The library was at the end of the south hall ; and to reach it he had to pass the rooms of Jacquetta and Jacinto, which were opposite each other. Thinking of her with returning tenderness, he started on his errand, humming a verse of the old song :

"I might have had a king's daughter,  
Far, far beyond the sea ;  
I might have had a king's daughter,  
Had it not been for love of thee."

The door of Jacinto's room lay open as he passed, and something caught his eye, and he paused.

Well he might ! Well might he stand transfixed, while the blood flushed in a crimson tide for one instant to his very temples, and then retreated, leaving him white even to his lips.

On a sofa indolently reclined Jacinto—his head resting on one hand, the other toying with the silken curls of Jacquetta, while he gazed up in her face with eyes full of love and joy. She bent above him ; her arms around him as she knelt beside his couch, talking in softest whispers ; and at last, as he stood there, he saw her stoop down and press her lips warmly to his.

The sight maddened him. What he would have said—what he would have done in his first fierce outburst of rage and jealousy, it would be hard to say ; but both had heard him, and both were on their feet in a moment. Face, and neck, and brow of Jacquetta grew crimson for an instant—the next, it vanished ; and with a look on her face he had never seen there before, she walked over and confronted him.



## CHAPTER XV.

## A QUEEN UNCROWNED.

"I hear a voice you cannot hear,  
Which says I must not stay;  
I see a hand you cannot see,  
Which beckons me away."

THERE was a pause, during which they stood gazing at each other, one in scorn, and the other in defiance. Jacinto stood with his face averted—silent, too. Jacquetta was the first to speak.

"Well, sir," she said imperiously.

He bowed in mock humility.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Jacquetta. I was on my way to the library to see my uncle, and passing here—"

"You stopped to look in."

"Not intentionally. The door being open, I gave a passing glance in, naturally; not expecting the interesting little *tableau vivant* that met my eye. Excuse me for interrupting it; I would not have done so for the world."

She grew crimson at the insinuation his tone conveyed.

"Insolent! What do you mean, sir?"

"Mean? Oh, nothing, my dear cousin! But would you mind my advising you to shut the door, in future, when you indulge in such little endearments? They are very natural and harmless, no doubt, but some of the servants may chance to see you; and servants *will* talk, you know?"

"Our servants will not; our guests appear to be more given to eavesdropping than they are. Be assured, sir, we *shall* take the precaution of shutting the door, in future. Have you anything else to advise?"

"Nothing," said Disbrowe, pale with passion and jealousy, "but that midnight interviews with old hags, and afternoon interviews with young Spaniards, should both be more discreetly managed, lest Miss Jacquetta De Vere find herself in trouble, some day."

"Miss Jacquetta De Vere is very much obliged to you,

but is quite capable of taking care of herself. Anything else, my worthy cousin?"

"Nothing else. Good-afternoon, Miss De Vere."

"One moment! Did you dream this pleasant little scene was to happen?" said Jacquetta, with a curious smile.

"Some faint vision like it may have passed through my mind, of late, but nothing quite so enchanting as the reality. I see now, why I was refused. Allow me to take the present opportunity of congratulating you on your good fortune, lest another should not occur, speedily."

"Where are you going?"

"To the library, just at present."

"Is papa there?"

"*My uncle* is there—yes," said Disbrowe, with emphasis.

"What do you mean, sir?" she demanded, with a sharp flash of her eye.

"Nothing. Part of my dream merely crossed my mind."

She looked at him as if she would have pierced him with her sharp, angry eyes; but his face wore no expression, save one of contemptuous sarcasm. It stung her to the quick; and again her pale face flushed, and her eye blazed with a dangerous light.

"I presume you are going to tell him what you have seen?"

He bowed.

"Miss Jacquetta is at liberty to construe my conduct as she pleases. At the same time, I would humbly insinuate I am neither an eavesdropper nor a tale-bearer."

"I confess, it looks like it," she said, with a curling lip. "One thing is certain: your conduct, since you came here, has been very far removed from that of a gentleman."

"Miss De Vere!" he said, haughtily.

"How has it been?" she broke out, fiercely. "Was it the part of a gentleman, in the first place, after receiving the hospitality of this house, to insult the daughter of your host by an offer of the love long ago pledged to another? Was it the part of a gentleman to follow me into a quarter of this house you knew was forbidden, to see, and hear, and spy on my actions? Was it the part of a gentleman, I say, to stop looking in doors and at scenes

you had no business to look—at things never meant for your eye?”

“I can believe *that*, Miss Jacquetta,” he said, in scornful anger; “and I might retort, by saying: “Was it the part of a lady to become an actor in such forbidden scenes—a De Vere stooping to love a nameless foreign adventurer?” I thought better things of my cousin.”

“Who cares what you thought, sir!” she said, with a passionate stamp of her foot. “I will love whom I please, do what I please, stoop to what I please, and defy you to your face.”

“Allow me to claim the same privilege, then.”

“*You* to come here to dictate to me!” continued Jacquetta, completely overcome by passion, and pacing fiercely up and down, after her custom when excited. “You, a complete stranger, who, because your mother chanced to bear our name, forsooth, think yourself privileged to rule lord and master of Fontelle Hall and Jacquetta de Vere. Who are you, sir? What are you, that you should dare to talk like this to me?”

“Verily, a man of little account,” said Disbrowe, with a cold, calm smile, that fairly maddened her, “and with no authority either in Fontelle or over Miss Jack de Vere; but, as she bears my family name, and claims kindred with me, I feel a friendly interest in her and her *reputation*.”

If a bullet had struck her, she could not have paused more suddenly in her passionate tread, nor turned of a more livid whiteness. Again, she clasped both hands over her heart, as he had seen her do before, and reel as if she had got a blow.

“She is fainting!” cried Jacinto, springing forward in terror.

Shocked and terrified at the effect of his words, spoken without thought in the white heat of his passion, Disbrowe advanced; and alarmed, lest she were really fainting, he would have caught her; but with a great cry, she held out her arms to keep him off.

“Go! go! Leave me!” she cried, huskily, pointing with one flickering finger to the door.

“My dearest cousin!” he said, in sorrow and remorse, “What have I said? Can you ever forgive me?”

"Leave me!" she exclaimed, passionately.

"Forget my words, dear Jacquetta; forget what I said."

"Never! so help me Heaven!" she fiercely cried. "Go, and never come back! I never want to look on your face again."

There was no resisting that tone! Sorrowfully, he turned away, casting one last look behind him—a look he never forgot till his dying day.

He saw her fling herself on the sofa, her hands still tightly clasped on her breast, her face buried in the pillows. He heard a passionate, anguished cry: "Oh, my heart! my heart!" And then the reproachful eyes of Jacinto were raised to his; the door was closed, and the young, fearless mountain-queen lay uncrowned and unthroned, unsceptered and disgraced, with the arrow he had sped quivering in her heart.

He had to stand for some moments himself to regain his calmness before he could knock at the library door. He turned the handle, in answer to his uncle's "Come in," and stood before him with his customary composure; but with a face paler and sterner than that worthy old gentleman had ever seen him wear before.

"My dear boy," he exclaimed, pushing up his spectacles, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing," said Disbrowe, taking a chair—"at least, nothing you need disturb yourself about. I have come to thank you for the pleasant hours I have spent beneath your roof, and to announce my departure."

"Your *what*?" exclaimed Mr. De Vere, in consternation.

Disbrowe smiled.

"My departure. I leave to-morrow."

"To-morrow! God bless us!" said Mr. De Vere, pushing back his chair, and looking at him. "Have you gone crazy?"

"No, sir; I hope not."

"Then what has put this absurd notion into your head? And so suddenly, too! Why, last night, when you told me you were going to write to Earnecliffe, to-day, you had no idea—not the remotest—of leaving."



Disbrowe colored.

"Circumstances alter cases. I have changed my mind since then."

"Ah, pooh! I won't hear it—I won't! Going away to-morrow, indeed! Oh, pooh! pooh! pooh! the notion is absurd," said Mr. De Vere, taking a huge pinch of snuff, and blowing his nose furiously.

"My dear uncle, if you only knew—"

"Well, I don't know, and what's more, I don't want to know. I won't hear of such a thing! I won't, positively! What will the girls say?"

Disbrowe smiled bitterly.

"They will hardly regret my departure, I fancy."

"Yes they will, too, you must not fancy any such thing. Gusty's cold and undemonstrative, I know, and you have seen what a glamour that infernal old hag has cast over her. But she likes you none the less; and Jack's wild and saucy. But it's her way; and I'm sure she will be outrageous when she learns it. Oh, you mustn't think of going at all. It won't do, you see."

"Unfortunately, my dear sir, it is not a matter of thought. I *must* go."

"Nonsense. You can stay if you like. Who is to make you? Who is to say *must* to you?"

"Ah! 'thereby hangs a tale!'" said Disbrowe, smiling slightly. "There is one o'er the water a-sighin' for me!"

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. De Vere, a light breaking in on him. "'There is,' as they say of the duels, 'a lady in the case.'"

Disbrowe bowed; and a faint red tinged his cheek.

"Indeed! who is she, Alfred?"

"Miss Norma Macdonald. You remember the Macdonalds of Castle Hill, Inverness. Her father is of that ilk."

"I knew them—yes. There were two brothers—Angus and Randall. And a wild scapegrace Randall was—inordinately fond of 'women and wine.' Which is her father?"

"Randall Macdonald. He is a reformed character now. His elder brother died, and all the property fell to him.

He was abroad at the time, and only returned upon the death of his brother—a widower, then, with his only daughter, at the time five years old.”

“Does he live at Castle Hill?”

“No; he bought a magnificent estate in Derbyshire, and has lived there ever since I can remember. I fancy he found the old manor rather dull and gloomy, and so preferred England.”

“And so you are engaged to be married to her?”

“Yes, sir, I believe I am,” said Disbrowe, carelessly.

“Is she handsome?”

“More—she is beautiful.”

“Of course. Was there ever a lover thought otherwise? Well, she comes of a good family. No better—good old Scotch blood flowing in her veins. Who was her mother?”

“Can’t say. A foreign lady, I believe. Indeed, if I am not greatly mistaken, she was an American. Mr. Macdonald, I know, was in America for some time, and, from several slight things, I more than once suspected she was a native of this new country. He never alluded to the subject himself. I never heard him speak of his wife in my life.”

“Humph! that’s odd. Perhaps—but no matter. When are you to be married?”

“When Miss Macdonald attains her nineteenth birthday.”

“And when will that blessed time be?”

“Sometime next November, I believe.”

“You *believe*! You’re a pretty lover! Of course, you are all impatience till the time comes!”

“Of course!” was the dry answer.

Mr. De Vere looked at him with a queer smile.

“Is she rich?”

“Very—worth ten thousand a year.”

“Which, with the barony of Guilford, and the earldom of Earnecliffe, will be nearly a hundred thousand. Do you know you will be one of the richest peers in England one of these days, Alfred?”

“I need it. I am poor enough now.”

“I suppose Earnecliffe gives you a liberal allowance.”

"Does he? Something like two thousand a year; and what is that to me—and with the set I move among, too?" said Disbrowe, contemptuously.

"Many a man could subsist pretty easily on that sum," said his uncle, drily. "My yearly income does not exceed it."

Disbrowe stared.

"My dear uncle, I thought you were rich."

"Well, I am, too—as rich as I want to be."

Captain Disbrowe felt a strong inclination to whistle; but he didn't.

"My dear boy, will you let your old uncle ask you a question, without being offended?"

"Certainly, sir. Ask as many as you please."

"Then, was it you or Lord Earnecliffe brought about this engagement?"

"Earnecliffe."

"Ah! indeed! Do you love her, Alfred?"

"No, sir!" said the young man, coldly.

"My dear boy!"

"My dear uncle!"

And Disbrowe positively laughed in his uncle's grave face.

"But, really, this is—oh, Alfred! this marrying without love is a wretched piece of business! I do not approve of it at all."

"My dear uncle, who would expect to find you sentimental?"

"Sentimental!" said Mr. De Vere, almost angrily. "I am not sentimental. Does she love you?"

An expression almost like remorse crept over the handsome young face.

"I think so—I believe so! It is more than I deserve from her!"

"Poor girl! You will be good to her, Alfred?"

"I will try to be, sir."

"I do not like these marriages *de convenance*—they are obsolete in this age of improvement. I wonder you should consent to such an arrangement, Alfred."

"My dear sir, what would you have? I can't do better. She is everything I can desire. I like her well enough;

she loves me, with all my faults ; and we will get along very well together."

"Did you ever love any one, Alfred?"

"It is late to ask that question. Of course, like every other young man, I have been in love scores of times. It is like the measles and whooping-cough—we must suffer through such attacks."

"If you like no other woman better than her, you may do well enough ; but if—do you like any one better, my dear boy?"

Disbrowe was silent ; but his cheek flushed.

"‘Silence gives consent.’ Will you not tell your old uncle, Alfred?"

"You had better not ask that question, sir."

"I am your friend, Disbrowe."

"I know it, sir ; and for that reason I would not tell you."

"Alfred!"

The young man sprung from his chair, and began pacing violently up and down the room. Mr. De Vere looked at him in something like dismay.

"Lord bless me ! It can't be possible you know !"

"What, sir?"

"That you have gone and fallen in love with—"

"Well?" said Disbrowe, almost fiercely.

"Augusta!" exclaimed Mr. De Vere.

"No, sir!" said Disbrowe. "Make your mind easy on that point. My cousin Augusta is up among the stars—too high above my reach. It happens to be some one nearer the earth."

"Oh!" said Mr. De Vere, looking relieved. "I thought, by your manner, it was some one here ; and, as Augusta is the only one—"

"The *only* one ! You forget you have another daughter !"

"What ! Good Heavens !" exclaimed his uncle, in perfect horror. "It is not possible that you love—"

"Jacquetta De Vere ! Yes, sir ; I do, with all my heart and soul !" fiercely, passionately, exclaimed Disbrowe.

Mr. De Vere fell back, perfectly speechless, in his chair,



"Yes; I love her so well that I would marry her to-morrow, if I could!"

"My dear Alfred, this is—this is—horrible!" gasped Mr. De Vere.

"What! is it such an unheard of thing, that a man being engaged to one, loves another!"

"No; it is not that. You do not know. Good Heavens! if you only did!" cried Mr. De Vere, perfectly aghast.

"Know what, sir?"

"Oh, I can't tell you—I can't tell you! My *dear* boy, this is the most unheard of—the most shocking—why, I thought you couldn't endure one another—you were always quarreling."

"That could not prevent me from loving her."

"Bless my soul! Did ever anybody hear anything like this! Why, it's dreadful—it's monstrous—it's—it's—I'm *astounded*, Captain Disbrowe! Love Jacquetta? Why, it's perfectly awful!"

Disbrowe stopped, and looked at him in amazement.

"I never heard the like—I never did—in all my life! I couldn't have believed such a thing!" went on Mr. De Vere, in a perfect ecstasy of dismay.

"Uncle, there is some mystery in this. What crime have I committed, in loving my cousin, beyond my breach of faith to Norma? Would it not have been as bad had I loved Augusta?"

"Loved Augusta! You're crazy, young man? Of course, it wouldn't! Why, that would be nothing! But to love Jack—oh, it's—it's *terrific*!"

"Really, uncle," said Disbrowe, coldly, "this is very singular, to say the least. Miss Jacquetta appears to be a sort of human Koh-i-noor—a female mysterious princess, whom it is high treason to look at. I do not see any thing at all terrific about the business."

"Oh, you don't know—you don't know. Good gracious! if you *did*! Does Jacquetta know this?"

"Yes, sir."

"She does! My dear boy, what did she say?"

"Say? She said so much that I would find it difficult to tell you. I know she got into a towering passion, and told me I had insulted her—which was far enough from

my thoughts, Heaven knows! One thing you may set your mind at rest about—she doesn't care two coppers for me."

"Heavens be praised for that!"

Disbrowe stopped in his excited walk, and looked at him, as well he might.

Mr. De Vere had recovered from his first paroxysm of horror and astonishment, and was growing calm.

"This is a most unfortunate affair—dreadfully unfortunate—the worst thing that could possibly happen! and I am very sorry for you, my dear boy. Yes; you must go—there is no help for it; but you must return again, sometime—*when you are married!*"

A strange sort of smile flickered around Disbrowe's handsome mouth; but his only reply was a slight bow.

"Does she—Jacquetta I mean—know you are going to-morrow?"

"No, sir."

"Will you tell her?"

"Most assuredly, sir!" said Disbrowe, haughtily. "You do not suppose I am going to steal off without bidding her good-by. I shall see her to-morrow."

"My dear Alfred, I am very sorry, and I know you feel this deeply; but believe me, Jacquetta feels it just as much as you can possibly do."

Disbrowe thought of the scene in Jacinto's chamber, and again that bitter, mocking smile came over his face.

"You must try to forget her; you must try to be happy; you must love your bride. Will you, Alfred?"

"I will try."

"God bless you, my dear boy! I could find it in my heart to keep you here forever, when you look at me with your dead mother's eyes. And so you go to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir; I will leave here for New York, and from there, in a day or two, will start for—"

"Merrie England! The dear old land that I long to see again."

"I hope to see you at Fontelle Park, sir—*old* Fontelle," said Disbrowe, with a smile.

"Perhaps I may. When you are married, I will bring Augusta, and come over to see you."

"Do so, my dear uncle ; and, whether married or single, you will always be welcomed with a true heart to the old home of the De Veres."

"I know it. Give my love to Earnecliffe and Lady Margaret. I suppose you will be busy for the rest of the evening ; so I will not detain you."

Disbrowe left the library, and sought his own room, to arrange his affairs before starting. It occupied him until the supper-bell rung : and then he descended the stairs with a small pain at his heart, as he thought it was the last time, in all probability, he should ever hear it.

Neither Jacinto nor Jacquetta appeared, and he was glad of it. He could not bear the sight of either very well just then ; and yet he would not for worlds have gone away without seeing the latter. He looked forward to that last meeting with something of the same feeling wherewith a criminal led to execution might look his last at the bright sun, and beautiful sky and smiling earth, knowing he would never look upon them in the world again.

Frank was loud in his lamentation, and Augusta looked her regret at losing her cousin ; but Disbrowe sat and listened with a strange, relentless feeling at his heart, for

" Ever close and near  
A lady's voice was in his ear."

And all the evening he watched the door with feverish impatience for her coming, starting whenever it opened, and sinking back with a sickening feeling of disappointment when she came not.

The clock struck eleven before his uncle and cousin left the drawing-room that evening ; and he found himself alone with his own thoughts—angry and disappointed, in spite of himself, at her absence. What if he should not see her at all before he left ? He strove to persuade himself that he did not care—that she was nothing to him ; he thought of her as he had seen her last ; but all would not do. The thought that it was the very last time, perhaps, he should ever see her, softened his feelings. She rose before him bright and radiant, as he had first seen her, standing in the golden

glory of the bright morning sunshine; and he could remember nothing but that he loved her with all his heart, and was about to lose her forever. With something like a groan, he sat down by the table, and dropped his head on his arm; and for more than an hour he sat there, as still and motionless as if death had stilled forever that impulsive heart. Proud he had been called, and proud he was, too; but he felt humble enough now.

Dear reader, you may think him inconsistent; and perhaps he was. But just remember the time you were in love yourself, and had to bid Sarah Jane or Mary Ann good-by; and, although you were madly jealous of her and that ferociously good-looking whiskered jacknapes she had flirted with last, how dreadfully bad you felt about it, and how ready you were to forgive her all, and lay your head in her *mousseline de laine* bosom and groan out all your love and repentance. And lovers and lunatics are not to be held accountable for what they say and do, as sane people like you and I are; and so poor Alfred Disbrowe thought, and nobody contradicted him; but, in spite of his prospective coronet, and hundred thousand a year, he was the most miserable, forlorn young Briton in existence.

He took no heed of passing time, as he lay there; he only remembered that it was the last night he was to pass under the same roof with Jacquetta and that thought brought with it the bitterness of death. So he lay, perfectly motionless, and so dead to all outer things, that he heard not the door softly open, nor saw the light, delicate figure that stood in the doorway.

It was Jacquetta, paler, perhaps, than usual, but with a cold, proud look on her face, and the defiant fire still smoldering in her dark eye, ready to blaze up again at one haughty word or supercilious tone. There was that in her look, half-shyness, half defiance, such as shines through the wild eyes of half-tamed animals; but it softened as it fell on that prostrate figure and young, grief-bowed head. A pang smote her heart at the sight. There was something so forlorn and sorrowful in his attitude—so touching to see in one so proud. She could



forget his taunts and bitter words, and remember, with a still, softening heart, that she was the cause, and that on the morrow he was going away never to come back. She came over, and one little white hand fell softly and tenderly among the neglected locks of his rich brown hair.

"Dear Alfred!" she said, gently.

He looked up, and the last trace of her anger faded away at the sight of his grieved face and sad, reproachful eyes.

"Oh, Jacquetta! have you come at last?"

"Yes; to bid you good-by."

"You know, then, I am going away?"

"Yes."

"And you are glad, no doubt," he said, with some of his old bitterness.

"We will not quarrel again, cousin Alfred, if you please. We have had enough of that for one while. Let us part friends."

"Friends we never can be, Jacquetta!"

"I am sorry for it," she said, sadly.

"Something far more or something far less we must be to one another. As cousins we may part—never as friends."

"You will think differently by-and-by; you are angry now."

"Oh, Jacquetta! I wish to Heaven I had never come here!" he cried, vehemently.

"It is useless wishing that now. It might have been better for each of us if you never had; but what will be will be."

"Oh, Jacquetta! is it too late yet? I will give up every thing for you! Perish wealth and rank, when put in competition with this dear hand!"

"Enough, cousin Alfred. You are raving again. You say we cannot part friends; we will go to the other extreme and part enemies, if you keep on like this. Between you and Jacquetta De Vere lies a gulf as wide as that between Lazarus and Dives, and just as impassable. I will not see you to-morrow; so I have come to bid you good-by and God-speed to-night."

She held out her hand with a faint smile. He took it, and dropped his hot forehead on the cool, white palm.

"And it all ends here, Jacquetta."

"Yes. Is it not a better ending than that Grizzle Howlet prophesied?"

He started, and his face was crimson.

"I have lived in a trance since I came here—the pleasantest one I ever knew, and it is very hard this awaking. Oh, Jacquetta! I never knew till now how dear you were to me!"

"You will forget me in a month."

"Never!" he almost fiercely exclaimed.

"You will laugh at this in three months, and wonder you could ever have been such a—shall I say it?—simpleton. See if I am not a true prophet!"

He dashed her hand away, and sprung to his feet.

"Jacquetta, you are enough to drive a man mad! Your heart is as hard as a nether mill-stone! You have no more feeling than a block of iron!"

She smiled slightly, and looked at him with her calm, gray eyes.

"Don't look at me! You drive me frantic with your cold, icy eyes! Good Heavens! that, with such a fire in my heart, you can stand before me such an iceberg!"

"Ice extinguishes fire, and one lunatic is enough at a time. When you are done raving, I may begin."

"And this—this is what I have loved! This dead heart—this marble statue—this girl of ice—this—"

"Perfidious, unfeeling, abandoned female! There, I have helped you out! Now stamp up and down, and tear your hair, and swear till all's blue! That's the way they do it in the plays."

"Did you come here to mock me? Am I an idiot in your eyes?" he asked, passionately.

"Very like it, I must confess, at this present moment. I came here to bid you farewell, as I am going away to-morrow morning, and will not see you again; so, if you have no objection, I will sit down till you have ranted yourself back to your sober senses, and then we will part as decent Christians should,"

She drew an elbow-chair up to the fire, poked it up un-

til it burned out in a great sheet of flame, and then putting two little slippered feet up on the fender, she leaned her elbow on the arm of the chair, dropped her cheek on her hand, yawned wearily, and looked in the fire.

There is nothing will drive one frantic sooner than getting into a passion with another, and seeing them sit as serene and unmoved as a wax doll before us. Disbrowe was like one insane for a few moments, and burst out in a fierce tirade, in which "cruel, heartless, unwomanly" were among the mildest epithets applied to her, but she listened to all as if he were a parrot repeating a lesson. At last he got exhausted, and flung himself into a seat, like a sulky lion.

"Well, are you done?" she said, looking up, and yawning behind her finger-tips. "I want to go to bed."

"Go, then!" he said, bitterly.

"But, won't you say good-by first?"

"With all my heart! I never said it to any one more gladly!"

"Well, that's pleasant to hear, and very polite on your part, too. I forgive you for all the names you called me, as I believe I gave you a blowing-up the other evening, and it's only tit for tat. So good-by, cousin Alfred."

She got up and held out her hand.

"Good-by," he said coldly, just touching the tips of her white, jeweled fingers.

"Oh! this will never do! Shake hands, cousin."

"I had rather be excused. I only shake hands with my friends."

"And I am never to be placed in that category. Well, I should not mind that much; but I hate to part in anger with any one I may never see again. Come! don't display such an unchristian feeling, my dear Alfred! Do as you would be done by, you know; and if that does not move you, remember that pathetic little canticle of the excellent and prosy Watts, beginning: 'Let dogs delight to bark and bite,' and just apply that touching passage, 'Your little hands were never made to tear each other's eyes' to our case, and I am sure it will move you, since it might move Mount Vesuvius, or any other fiery excrescence."

"We are too civilized for anything of that sort, my dear

cousin," he said, bitterly. "We only tear each other's hearts."

"Well, being children of a larger growth, it is to be expected we should improve in the act of torture. But, cousin Alfred, I am tired of this fencing; our swords may slip and one of us get a hard blow. Besides, unromantic as the confession sounds, I am dreadfully sleepy. Once more farewell, and God speed you, my dear cousin."

Her voice faltered a little. It is hard to say good-by, even to an everyday acquaintance whom we like; but oh! very, very hard to one we love! He saw her lip quiver, and it moved him as nothing else could have done. His anger and bitterness all vanished, and he was on his feet in an instant; holding both her hands in his, and saying, passionately:

"Jacquetta, Jacquetta! my first, my last my only love, good-by, and God bless you! I have been mad to talk to you as I did. My dearest love, say you forgive me before we part."

"I forgive you. Let me go."

Still he held her. A fire was rising in his eye, a flush was rising in his face. She looked up, and quailed in fear before that glance.

"Let me go!" she cried, wildly; "let me go, sir What do you mean?"

"Jacquetta!"

"Are you mad, Captain Disbrowe? Let me go, I command you!" she cried with a passionate stamp of her foot.

"Jacquetta!"

With a fierce cry, she wrenched her hands from his grasp, and fled to the door. She stood there for one moment like a wounded stag at bay, her eyes blazing, her face colorless, panting, frightened, defiant. He did not move; he stood like a statue.

"Once more, farewell, and *bon voyage!*" she said, waving her hand. And the next moment the sparkling little vision was gone, and Captain Alfred Disbrowe was alone.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE STORY IN THE LONE INN.

“How now, you secret, black and midnight hag,  
What is't you do?”  
MACBETH.

THAT same night, three hours earlier, there “might have been seen,” if there had been anybody out to see, which there wasn't, an ancient mariner plodding his way along the lonesome road between the Mermaid Tavern and the lone inn. The night was dark, and the road was bad, but Captain Nick Tempest had a supreme contempt for muddy roads, and the clerk of the weather; so, with his hands in his pockets, and a plug of tobacco in his mouth, his tarpaulin cocked on one side of his head, he plunged manfully along, whistling “Barbara Allen,” as he went, by jerks, with long pauses between the bars.

Captain Tempest was thinking—which was something he was not in the habit of doing as a general thing, being more given to *acting*. Old Grizzle's manner the night before had implied something serious; and he felt intensely curious to know what revelations she had to make to-night. That it was something important, he felt convinced—for Grizzle was not a lady to make a mystery of trifles; and moreover, she had contrived to have her two hopeful sons, Kit and Blaize, and her equally-hopeful brother, old Till, sent out of the way, that she and the commander of the “Fly-by-Night” might hold their nocturnal *tête-à-tête* undisturbed.

Not being blessed with a very vivid imagination, however, old Nick found the nut too hard to crack; and so wisely resolved not to strain his teeth trying it, but to wait until time and his fair friend should see fit to extract the kernel.

Having, with much pain and labor, come to this philosophical conclusion at last, Captain Nick steered contentedly along, with that rolling motion peculiar to marine gentlemen, like a ship on an uneasy swell. Plunging resolutely through the wet level where the old house stood, he reached it at last; and, giving a tremendous knock, began

yelping like a whipped cur. Evidently this was a sort of signal, for the sound of bolts withdrawing, followed instantly. The door swung open, and the pleasant face of old Grizzle Howlet beamed on him by the light of the lantern.

"Good-night, my chick-a-leary! Punctuality is the soul of time," said the captain, in a hazy recollection of some proverb. "How do you find yourself this morning, my sweet pet? Blooming and beautiful as the Goddess of Morning, as usual, I see."

"There was a time when you thought me blooming enough," said the woman, in a harsh voice, as she secured the door; "when you would have shot any other man for even looking at me!"

"Ah! every one is a fool some time in their life," said the captain, flinging himself into a chair before the kitchen fire, and stretching out his legs to the genial heat. "Not that I would insinuate I made a fool of myself in that blessed and verdant time of youth: for you are a second Helen, for whom another Troy might be lost. 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' but greater still is Grizzle of New Jersey! Got any beer?"

"Yes; take it," said the woman, ungraciously, pointing to a jug and a pewter pot on the table. "There's a pipe, too, if you want it."

"It's just exactly what I do want. Ah! that's prime stuff!" said the captain, smacking his lips. "It reminds me of the bottles of 'alf-and-'alf we used to drink in the green-room of Old Drury, between the scenes. Do you remember those blissful times, my beauty?"

"Yes, better than I want to," said Grizzle, almost savagely, as she sat on a low stool, and with her elbow on her knees, and her chin between her hands, looked gloomily in the fire. "I'm not likely to look at you and forget them."

"And here's a han' my trusty frien',  
And gie's a han' o' thine,  
We'll tak' a right gude-willie waucht  
For the days o' auld lang syne,"

sung the captain, jocosely, as he resumed his seat, and leisurely proceeded to fill his pipe.

"That's so, old friend. Ah! those were the days!"

"I am glad you think so well of them. You gave me cause to remember them after another fashion."

A grim smile broke over the face of the captain, as he pushed up his hat, which he considered it a superfluous piece of ceremony to take off; and, having unbuttoned his coarse pea-jacket and thrown it open, he blew a few whiffs of smoke to get his pipe in good going order, and leisurely replied:

"I believe I did act kind of ugly about that business; but you see, my love, man is naturally fickle, and Captain Nick Tempest particularly so. What does our old acquaintance, Shakspeare—glorious Will—say?

'Trust not to man—we are by nature false,  
Dissembling, cruel, subtle, and inconstant.  
When a man talks of love, with caution trust him;  
But if he swears, he'll certainly deceive thee.'

And I was ready to swear, you know, that fair was foul and foul was fair, for your sake, at one time. It is wonderful how soon I got over that short brain-fever."

"Yes; when a prettier face came between," said the woman, bitterly. "Don't scowl, Nick Tempest! The day has gone by when I feared your frown!"

"Did you ever fear it?"

"No need to ask that question; you know too well I didn't dare to call my soul my own. Thank Heaven I am not the only woman in the world who has been deceived!"

"A charitable thanksgiving!" said the captain, with a sneer. "You didn't bring me here, I hope, to talk maudlin sentiment of by-gone days. 'Let the dead bury their dead.' It's devilish hard to rekindle black ashes."

"Don't fear. I have no more wish to recall the past than you have. Yet it may be necessary to allude to it more than once to-night."

A dark, sinister smile was on her face, and her evil eyes gleamed red and hot in the light of the fire.

"Well, fire away, my duck! My feelings are none of the tenderest, or most sensitive," said the captain, smoking severely.

"Then you have changed since a certain day, some years ago, if you remember. There was a name then you did not exactly covet hearing."

"You mean Lelia. I've got nicely over that."

"I am glad to hear it. Then you will not object to my alluding to her a little?"

"What do you want to allude to her for? What's the use of raking up plague-pits?"

"I never do anything without an object, as you will discover before I have done. I have sent for you to tell you a short, and, I flatter myself, not uninteresting story, to-night."

The captain stared.

"A story—what the dickens? You have not taken leave of your senses, have you?"

"Not exactly! Are you ready to listen?"

"All right—heave ahead."

The woman glanced askance at him, as he sat smoking, the very picture of composure—an evil, mocking glance; and then, dropping her voice in the monotonous monotone of a true story-teller, she began:

"Once upon a time, in a certain theatrical corps, of a certain theatre in Old England, there was a leading actress, a young girl, who did the heavy-tragedy business, and was one of the bright particular stars of the day—she was not very handsome, this girl; but when she trod the boards, and her voice rung through the house, people forgot her looks, and thunders of applause shook the building from pit to ceiling. Night after night, when she appeared as Lady Macbeth, Jeanne d'Arc, Catherine De Medicis, and a score of other dark, fierce characters, into which she could throw all the fire and passion of her nature, has her name been shouted until the dense public were hoarse; and flowers and bouquets, and jewels sometimes, have rained down on the stage, until you could not step for trampling on them; and this tragic muse, this new Melpomene became the toast of the day."

"Self-praise is no recommendation," muttered the captain.

"Peers of the land knelt at her feet with offers, which she spurned, as she did these who made them—spurned



them with fierce, indomitable pride, until all London had to respect, as well as praise her. Offers of marriage were made her, too, from men over whose eyes, and brains, and hearts, her acting cast a glamour, like the fatal song of the fabled syren—offers she once never dreamed of receiving; and yet she spurned them, too. And why did she do so?—tell me why?”

And the woman turned fiercely round on the stoical captain.

“Ah! just so! Why, the deuce only knows,” said that worthy mariner, with an expressive shrug.

“You know, which amounts to the same thing! There was a young actor attached to the same company—not much noted for his beauty, nor his dramatic talent; a wild, reckless, devil-may-care sort of a desperado—fierce as a Bedouin of the desert—feared by all, and loved by none.”

“My dear, you flatter,” said Captain Nick, with a look of mock humility.

“Loved by none, did I say? Ah, yes! there was one—more fool she—who loved him with all her heart, with all her soul—would have sold herself to Satan to win one smile from him. A woman’s heart is a strange riddle, since even she herself cannot read it.”

“That’s so!” said the captain, emphatically.

“This actress, who had refused so many better, richer, handsomer men, stooped to love him—how well, there is no need to tell now. And he—he discovered it. She was not one to keep such a secret, she had hot blood in her veins—hot blood that had descended to her through fiery channels.”

“So had he,” said the captain, with a laugh; “and there is an old-country saying, that ‘butter to butter is no kitchen.’”

“He was proud of it—he might well be; for it elevated him from the nobody he was before, into an object almost of equal interest with herself. She was rich, and she shared her wealth with him; and he took her money and led a life of riot and wildest debauchery, spending it like water from the clouds.”

Captain Nick preceptibly winced.

"He said he loved her, and she believed him—poor fool! Perhaps he thought he did; but at all events, he loved her money and the reputation he had gained by having his name linked with hers. And it was all arranged that they were to be married as soon as her engagement was ended, and travel in the Continent. She did not entirely disapprove of his wild courses: women rather like men who have the reputation of being harum-scarum dare-devils; but she thought he carried things to excess—more especially as he sometimes stooped to robbery—even to robbing the dead. Once her husband, she thought she could have reformed him a little; and that, having sown his wild cats, he would settle down and leave the crop to the birds of the air."

"Humph!" said the captain.

"It is doubtful whether she would have succeeded—the demon had too strong a hold of him for that; but, at all events, she was spared the trouble. A young ballet girl of surpassing beauty appeared—a young French girl, only known as Lelia—poor as a church-mouse, and, rumor said no better than she ought to be."

"Rumor lied there! She was the peer of the actress, in these days, on that point!" said Captain Tempest, calmly.

"Perhaps so; her after-actions showed it! Well, this young actor saw her, and a powder-magazine, when a lighted torch is thrown in it, could not quicker or more fiercely go off, than did he after Mademoiselle Lelia."

"Just like him? He always had a nasty habit of going up like a rocket and coming down like a stick," said the captain, with a half chuckle.

"I do not suppose she loved him—I am pretty sure she did not; but she wanted to get married, and she thought by his way of living he had plenty of money. And so he had; but the generous, noble-hearted youth! it was her money that he was spending so riotously—she who was fool enough to trust him, and believe in him implicitly."

"What is the good of ripping up these old sores? I wish you would get done, Grizzle!" said Captain Nick, impatiently.

She smiled sardonically.

"Have patience. I am only beginning! I hope you like the story, Nick. I see you recognize the characters."

"You be hanged!" growled the captain, twisting uneasily under her piercing gaze.

"Perhaps I may some day, and you too, if the gallows gets its due. Let us live in hope. Well, as I was saying, the actor and the ballet-girl fell in love with each other—or we will suppose so—and the result of it was an elopement and a marriage. Both were beggars, with no way in the world of earning their salt; so you see what a pair of idiots they were."

"Yes; I can see through a hole in a ladder as well as any one."

"The actress heard it, and people expected a scene; but they were disappointed. She might have been a little more fierce and passionate that night, playing Lady Macbeth, but nothing more. She was one of those who could die and make no sign. And yet, would you believe it, though her eyes were dry, her heart shed tears of blood! She tore off her velvet robe and glittering jewels that night, in the silence of her own room; she tore her flesh, and writhed like one seared with red hot iron—the fool, the idiot, the bedlamite, the besotted lunatic!"

"Upon my soul, Grizzle!" exclaimed the captain, "you are the best hand to abuse yourself I ever heard. If anybody called me half these names, I would be inclined to knock them into the middle of next week—if not further."

"I deserve it all! I was what so many others of my sex are for the same cause every day—a blind fool! But I will never get to the end of my story if you continue throwing in those marginal notes of yours. To have done business up perfectly, I am aware this actress ought to have died of a broken heart, and 'out of her bosom there grew a red rose, and out of his bosom a brier,' etc.; but that was not in her line. What do you suppose she did, when she found herself deserted?"

"Consoled herself with somebody else."

"Right! She accepted the very first offer she got afterward, and married an unfortunate little anatomy she could have doubled up and put in her pocket if she chose. She

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did it for two reasons: first, to let people see how little she thought of his desertion: and second, to have a husband she could govern, and who would do exactly as she told him."

"Poor little Luke Howlett!" laughed the captain. "I always did pity him. It's a mercy they took him up above as soon as they did."

"She found out that her false lover and his bride had started for the new *refugium peccatorum*—America; and she followed them with her little tom-tit of a husband. In New York they met, and a rather singular meeting it was. The gay deceiver was not quite as wide-awake at that time as he is to-day; and the serene face and pleasant smiles of his forsaken lady-love completely deceived him, and he imagined himself entirely forgiven. The stupid dough-head! to think such a woman would ever forgive such a wrong!"

"Come, my beauty, don't turn the tables, and begin to abuse me instead of yourself. I can't stand too much of that sort of thing, you know."

"Before the honeymoon was over, our turtle-doves found it was one thing to talk about living on love, and another to do it. Lelia's pretty face and bright curls were doubtless very nice things in their way; but bread and butter were a good deal more substantial in the end—and so her young husband found. To labor, he was not able—to beg, he was ashamed. So he split the difference and went to sea."

A shade fell on Captain Tempest's face. Grizzle looked up with a smile, and, after a pause, went on:

"Will you mind me making a jump, and skipping over six years? Our new-born sailor still continued cruising about, and, when he came home, still continued as absurdly fond of his pretty wife as ever, and quite doted on his bright little five-year-old daughter. Ah! you flinch! Do you begin to feel the screws tightening?"

"Go on," he said defiantly.

"Well, one day he went to sea, and was wrecked somewhere on the coast of Cuba, and all hands were lost but himself. You know the adage: 'Born to be hanged will never be drowned.' So you will not wonder at that.



He was picked up by a private vessel, and would you believe it?—eleven years passed before he came back.”

Something like a groan came from the lips of the captain.

“But come he did at last—a weather-beaten, scarred, prematurely-old man. And where do you think he found his wife and child?”

“You hag of Hades! I may thank you perhaps, for it all.”

“You may. But for me she would never have ran away.”

“You she-fiend! Are you not afraid I will brain you?”

“No!”

“By the heavens above us! if you had made that confession six years ago, you would not have lived an instant after!”

“But I did not make it. I was not quite a fool! Be calm, and let me go on with my story. One year after her husband went away—when her daughter was six years old (and she was still a pretty, dark-eyed, bright-haired, merry French girl)—a young foreigner—a wild, rich, young Scotchman, stopped at my house. He was a handsome fellow, dark-eyed, merry, bold and gallant—just the one to take a lady’s eye—more especially such a lady as our pretty, young grass-widow.”

Captain Nick Tempest ground his teeth with impotent rage.

“His name was Randall Macdonald—how do you like it?—and he came from the old Macdonald who lived and fought in the days of Robert the Bruce. I introduced him to the handsome French girl, and what—Captain Tempest, my good friend—my dear friend—what was the result?”

“You cursed hag!” he groaned, through his clenched teeth.

Such a bitter sneer as was on her dark face—such a bitter, mocking, deriding sneer! Yet she looked up, and smiled in his face.

“Voyages across the ocean were slower even in those days than they are now; and our handsome Scotchman was lonesome, and wanted a companion. A pretty French

woman, gay and piquant, was just the thing; and the young gentleman was not one to be backward in offering her an invitation. I urged her to accept it. I promised to be a mother to little Lelia, and the result of our combined entreaties was, that Captain Tempest came from sea one morning, and found himself minus a wife."

She broke into a laugh—a low, sneering laugh, unspeakably insulting.

"I changed little Lelia's name, and gave her my second one; and, under my motherly care, she reached the age of thirteen. Then—but never mind that Lelia: we must follow the fortunes of the other. Randall Macdonald was fond of a roving life, and he and madame had rather a pleasant time of it, cruising round the world. Six years after his American escapade, his eldest brother died, and the family estate fell to him. The day that brought him the news saw Lelia cold and dead—of disease of the heart. She had died caressing her little daughter—his child—without a moment's warning. No wonder you never could find her when you went to search for her. You would have to dive a long way down under the waves of the lonesome sea to find the pretty form of Lelia Tempest."

He made a fierce gesture as if casting something from him, and drew a long, hard breath.

"Let her go! That is the last of *her*! But *my* child, woman—my daughter—my little Lelia! what of her?"

The woman laughed scornfully, and stirred the fire.

"Speak! I tell you! Speak! I command you!" he cried, fiercely. "You have not dared to kill her?"

"Kill her? Oh, no. That would be poor revenge!"

"You Satan! where is my child?"

"Don't fear; she is alive, and well."

He got up, white with eagerness.

"Woman, tell me where she is!"

"It is easy told—if I choose!"

"Grizzle, for the sake of old times—for the sake of all that is past and gone, let me see her—my little Lelia!"

She looked at him in scornful surprise, and broke into a deriding laugh.

"You to speak of what is past and gone!—you to exhort me by that! The man has gone mad!"

"You she-devil! speak! or I will tear it out of your foul throat!"

"Try it!"

"Can nothing move you? My little Lelia! Oh, Grizzle! can nothing move you!"

"Nothing you can say! Sit down; calm yourself, and you will hear all in due time. Perhaps you will not think 'my little Lelia, such a priceless jewel when you do find her!'"

"What do you mean? Grizzle Howlet, what have you done with that child?"

There was something so terrific in his look and tone at that moment, that she almost shrunk before it.

"Nothing very dreadful," she said, angrily. "Sit down, I tell you, or I won't speak another word to-night. What if you were to hate your daughter when I name her?"

"There is some dark meaning hid under this. Grizzle Howlet, has her mother's fate been hers?"

She laughed.

"Oh, no! Can you conceive nothing worse than that? Her mother loved and was beloved—in a sort of a way. I dare say she was happy."

His face worked, and his hands clenched. One fair spot remained still in that black heart—love for his child. But for how long?

"Will you tell me?" he said, in a strained voice.

"To be sure. That is what I have been coming to, all along. She is a fine lady."

"Well!"

"You have seen her—spoken with her!"

"Did she know me?"

"No."

"Where does she live?"

"Here—in New Jersey."

"Well, go on. I cannot bear this; you are torturing me."

"I will be merciful then. You were to me, you know! Do you remember a scene that occurred some thirty miles from here, one evening, among the mountains, when you

tried to send a certain handsome young Englishman to his long account?"

"Yes."

"A young girl—a bold, pretty little thing—red-haired and gray-eyed, like somebody else we know of—interposed—saved him, disarmed you, and sent you off, with a lecture?"

"Yes; curse her! I will be avenged for that!"

"Softly—softly, captain," said Grizzle, with her dark smile. "Wait until you hear who she is, first."

"Who is she?"

"Do you know that my name is Grizzle Jacquetta?"

"Well?"

"Well, I changed Lelia into Jacquetta, one day. It was easily done, and without troubling the Legislature."

He leaped to his feet with a cry. She arose, too, and confronted him.

"Grizzle Howlet, is she—"

"She *was* Lelia Tempest once; she is Jacquetta De Vere, now, and *your daughter!*"

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE END OF THE STORY.

"Such a mad marriage never was before."

—TAMING OF THE SHREW.

THERE is but one step—a very short one—between love and hatred. In all these years of crime, and daring and darkest guilt, the memory of his lost child—his little bright-eyed, sunny-faced Lelia—had ever lain warm and fair near his heart; the only fair spot, perhaps, in all that dark nature. He had thought, all along, that her mother had taken her with her in her guilty flight; but he knew little of the revenge Grizzle Howlet was capable of. He never dreamed of doubting her story for a moment—he *felt* it to be true, every word; and in that instant all his love for the little bright-faced child was swept away, like a whiff of down in the blast; and hatred of the daring, imperious young girl, who had conquered



him, took its place. He felt that she despised and looked down upon him, her father, although she knew it not; and a savage, demoniacal longing to drag her down to his own level, filled all his thoughts. She was his daughter; no one had such a right to her as he had. He hated the De Veres, and this dashing adopted daughter of theirs. What a glorious thing it would be now to tear her from them—to pull her from her pedestal—to show her to the world as Captain Nick Tempest's daughter! He felt a little proud of her, too; he exulted in the thought that she had her father's heart, and all his dauntless courage; and he felt he could freely forgive Grizzle Howlet all she had done for the revenge she had placed within his grasp now.

A fierce, grim smile—the smile of a demon bearing away a lost soul—broke over his dark face. He looked up, and met Grizzle Howlet's piercing eyes fixed full upon him.

“Well?” she said, curiously.

He stretched out his hand, still smiling:

“I forgive you, Grizzle! There is my hand on it! This repays me for all.”

“You believe me?” she said.

“Yes; I think you are telling me the truth. I feel that that girl is my daughter!”

“She is. Word for word what I have said is true—true as Gospel. Jacquetta De Vere is your child!”

“The gods be praised for that! The day of retribution is at hand!”

“What are you going to do?” said Grizzle, half-anxiously.

He sat down, resumed his former attitude before the fire, with that evil smile still on his face.

“You will see! But, first, have you accomplished your revenge?”

“No!” cried Grizzle, fiercely dashing her hand on the mantel—“no; that I have not! Until Jack De Vere lies despised and trodden on in the dust under my feet, my revenge will never be satiated!”

“What has she done to you, to make you hate her so?” said the captain, serenely.

"Done what I will never forgive, if I were dying!" almost screamed the woman, her lion-passions slipping their leashes for a moment. "I hated her, first, for her mother's sake—for her father's sake. I hated her as a child; for she never could endure me, even when I was kindest to her. I hated her as a girl, for her jibes and taunts. I hate her as a woman, for her scornful pride and haughty disdain; and hate her I will, to my dying day."

"You would have suited Doctor Johnson. Wasn't it he who liked a 'good hater'? Well, I don't blame you. She is a provoking little miss as ever lived, I have no doubt. So hate away, my beauty, as long as you like, and thank the Fates there is no lost love."

"I hate the De Veres, one and all, with their arrogant pride and supercilious contempt for all of inferior birth, and I swear to make them feel it. I have done so. The proudest of them all—the flower of the flock—lies crushed and bleeding under my feet! And there let her lie till the grave claims her!"

"Do you mean that haughty young empress, Lady Augusta?"

"Yes. I fancy I have settled her haughtiness for her!" said the woman, with a short, unpleasant laugh.

The captain looked curious.

"What has she done, and how did you get her in your power? Is she an adopted daughter, too?"

"No; she is a true De Vere, body and soul!"

"Then what power can you have over her? There is a long step between a De Vere and Grizzle Howlet."

"I have seven-league boots, and can take it. Never you mind, Captain Tempest. Your business is with Miss Jack, if you remember. What are you going to do, now that you have found out she is your daughter?"

"Claim her, to be sure! Think of a father's love, and all the rest of it, and you will perceive it is the only course," said the captain, with a laugh.

"Exactly. But how will you prove your claim?"

"You will come with me, my dear. When you and I lay our heads together, we can work wonders."

"We will, in this case. But have you no curiosity to

hear how she ever came to live in Fontelle at all, or to assume their name?"

"A great deal. But you have a disagreeable way of only answering questions when you like; so I did not care for getting a rebuff."

"Then listen to the sequel. I hope you will find it quite as interesting as the first volume, and it will show you what a woman can do when she seeks revenge; and it will clear up a certain little mystery that has puzzled more than one resident in Fontelle Hall. Have you ever been told that strange sounds were sometimes heard in the old north wing of that building?"

"Of course. Push ahead."

"I rather fancy they have startled a certain young gentleman resident there at present. And that reminds me, you have no particular love for him either. Have you?"

"No, by Heaven!" said the captain, with an oath. "He struck me once; and that is an insult that only his heart's blood can wipe out!"

"I think you can pierce his heart in an easier and safer way, and, in fact kill half a dozen birds with one stone. If he is not in love with Miss Jacquetta De Vere, then I know nothing of the tender passion; and, being as proud as Lucifer, he will be in a sweet frame of mind when he finds out who she is. Besides, he is engaged to another young lady. Guess who?"

"How the foul fiend can I guess? or what do I care?"

"A great deal, if you knew but all. The lady's name is Miss Norma Macdonald."

"Macdonald!"

"Yes," said Grizzle, with a smile; "her mother's name, I believe, was Mrs. Lelia Tempest, if you feel any interest in knowing it."

The captain gave a long, wailing whistle, and fell back in his seat.

"He is engaged to marry her, and is in love with your daughter; and our pretty Jacquetta is in love with him. Oh! it is the sweetest kettle of fish, all through, that ever you heard of."

"And it will be a death-blow to Don Monsieur Signor

Moustache Whiskerando to find out he is in love with old Nick Tempest's daughter. 'I see,' said the blind man. 'Tol de rol, de rol, de rol!' sung the captain, delighted.

"Preserve your transports, my dear friend," said Grizzle, dryly. "Time enough for them when you stand face to face with the future lord of Guilford and Earnecliffe. Remember, too, that though the old spae-wife of Worcestershire prophesied that 'a life would be lost betwixt ye,' she did not say which was to lose it. So Captain Nick Tempest had better take a fool's advice, and not halloo before he is out of the woods!"

"I don't fear him. Let him do his worst. Oh, this is revenge indeed! The bullet will hip them all to death—this come-by-chance of Lelia's as well as the rest."

"Don't be too sure—he will marry *her*."

"But, you say, he loves Jacquetta."

"So he does; but loving does not always imply marriage. I had hoped for a different end to the story, but this daughter of yours is made of more sterling stuff than her, and is not to be had for the asking. No; the Honorable Alfred De Vere Disbrowe will never marry her! He wouldn't if he could, and couldn't if he would."

"Two very good reasons. I should like to see this daughter of Lelia's."

A queer laugh broke from Grizzle's lips. Captain Tempest looked at her in surprise.

"Are you sure you never have?"

"Eh?"

"Do you really think you have never seen Miss Norma Macdonald?"

"Well, I can't say. I may have done so without knowing it, while knocking about this jolly old world."

"Ah, just so!" said Grizzle, carelessly, poking the fire. "By the way, Captain Tempest, where is that little Spaniard you brought over with you the other day?"

"Now you are off on another track. What the demon makes you ask after him?"

"Oh, nothing! I felt curious to know—that's all."

"Well, he's at Fontelle, if I don't mistake. I winged him that evening I met my dutiful daughter, in mistake



for our young English friend—poor little devil! I felt sorry for it, too, for I really liked the little codger.”

“And so they took him to Fontelle—hem!” said Grizzle, with a musing smile.

“There!—never mind him!—push along! I want to hear about Jacquetta!” said Captain Nick, impatiently.

“Well, all these things are so merged into one another, that it is difficult to separate them. I will try, however. I need not remind you that Jacquetta was six years old when her mother made her moonlight flitting.”

“I am not likely to forget it. Go on.”

“Well, she lived with me until she was thirteen years of age; and I took good care to impress on her memory the fact of her mother’s disgrace, and—if you will believe it—child as she was, she felt it keenly. Of her father, I never told her anything. I left that for the gentleman himself.”

“And quite equal he is to the task. Well?”

“She was a pretty little thing—small and light, like a fairy, with a laugh like a bird’s song, sweet and clear; short, flashing, dancing curls—red, like her father’s but very nice indeed; bright, sparkling, dark-gray eyes, and a dainty, delicate, pink-and-white complexion. I took care of her beauty, for a reason I had of my own, and cared for it every day, as a miser might for his money.”

“You old wretch!” said the captain, with a look of disgust.

“She was willful, fearless, bold, and stubborn, after her own way—her father’s child in every sense of the word. Once she put her foot down to do a thing, you might as well try to move the Highlands over there, as that small girl. She was cute, too, and wonderfully wide-awake for her years—keen as a Venetian stiletto, and surprisingly smart at learning, so I have my doubts whether or not I would have succeeded—though, thanks to my training, she had refreshingly vague ideas of right and wrong. In some ways, she was like a woman, with all a woman’s sense, even at that early age; and in others she was as simple as a child of three years. Howlet was dead, and my boys were away with Till; and I carefully kept Miss Jacquetta from all masculine eyes till the proper time

came. Kit loved her; for she had the wildest and most winning ways, when in good humor, that ever a fairy had; but she only laughed at him and nicknamed him and herself Beauty and the Beast, Bluebeard and Fatima, Red Riding-Hood and the Wolf, Vulcan and Venus, and other flattering and complimentary titles."

"Good girl, Jack!" laughed Captain Nick. "Her father's daughter, indeed! She knew what was what!"

"Kit's love soon turned to hate—as yours did, also, a little while ago; and I believe he would have throttled her, at times, if I would have let him. But I had better designs on the young lady than killing her, and an opportunity soon came for putting them into execution."

"Well?"

"Have you ever heard the name of Aubrey De Vere?"

"Not as I know of. Who was he?"

"A son of Mr. Robert De Vere, of Fontelle."

"What! I thought he had no sons?"

"Ah, he had, though—two."

"Well?"

"Aubrey was the eldest—tall and handsome, as all of his race are—but Nature, though she gifted him with wealth and beauty, gave him, also, a slight drawback, in the shape of madness; for there were times when the young man was a raving, furious maniac."

"Phew! That was a drawback, upon my word!"

"Some fright or shock he had received in his boyhood was the cause; and there were intervals still when he was perfectly sane. The family could always tell when one of his violent paroxysms were coming on, in rather a peculiar way. From childhood he had ever been passionately fond of music, but ever since the loss of his reason he never touched a musical instrument except when the furious outbreaks were approaching. Then he would sit down at the organ—his favorite instrument—and play as no man in his sober senses ever played before. His friends kept him confined, generally; but there were times when, with the cunning of madness, he would escape; and so sanely could he talk and act, that no one, except those who knew, would ever suspect him of not being sane."

"Not an uncommon case," said the captain. "I have often heard of similar ones before."

"I knew all the particulars. I heard it from an old servant in the house; so that, when, one stormy night, he came to my house (we lived on the other side of the Hudson then,) I knew him at once, and made him welcome to stay as long as he liked; for he had plenty of money and knew how to spend it. Here he saw Jacquetta, and fell in love with her, as only a madman can love."

"Well, and the result?"

"The result was a marriage. She liked him well enough, and had a mighty vague idea of what marriage was; and he was crazy after her. Oh, it was capital revenge! marrying her to a madman, whose family would cast her off with scorn, as if she were the dirt under their feet."

"You were a little out of your reckoning there, though," said the captain, with a sneer.

"Yes. I am glad of it now, though, since a prospect of more exquisite revenge has opened itself. Jacquetta was a child, then, and had no idea of what she was doing; but I knew she would wake one day, and then there would be a scene! How I gloated in the prospect! How I exulted when it came!"

"It did come then?"

"To be sure—but a long while after. I don't know whether it was his new-found happiness, or what; but Aubrey De Vere was sane a long time after that, and remained enchanted with his new toy—though his willful baby-wife got dreadfully tired of him sometimes. I could always tell when his insane fits were coming on, and smuggled him off to an upper room, and left him bolted and barred in till they passed away; and she knew nothing of them. It was not the time to tell her yet, though it was daily coming; for the woman's heart within her—like plants in a hot-house, prematurely forced—was rapidly maturing, even though the breast that bore it barely numbered fourteen summers.

"But one unlucky day during a brief absence of mine to the city, he broke out with one of his furious outbursts

of temporary madness, and raved, and foamed, and fled, like one possessed by a thousand devils, from the house. She shook—the amaze, the horror was too much for her—fearless as she was. When I came back, I found her lying senseless on the floor, and hours passed before she awoke from that death-like swoon.”

“Well?” said the captain, as Grizzle paused.

“There was a child born that night, and the baby-wife was a mother. The demon only knows what feeling prompted me to conceal the infant, but I did; a poor, miserable, puny thing it was; and when she recovered, she believed what I told her of its sudden death. Blaize and Kit had lately purchased this very house; and I had it conveyed here, and paid a woman for taking care of it. That woman was Tribulation Rawbones, now a servant in Fontelle.

“Well, Jacquetta recovered, and so did her husband. Strangely enough, he had gone to Fontelle in his first outbreak; and from his ravings, they guessed what had happened. When he became sane again, he would have denied it; but his father followed him to my house, and learned all the particulars. Of course there was a pretty to-do, then; and the old gentleman was like one beside himself with grief and rage. Jacquetta was a perfect little fury, and would have sprung on me and clawed like a wild-cat, only I fled from the room. How I laughed! how I enjoyed it! how delicious it was!” She laughed again at the recollection.

“You second Jezebel!” said the captain.

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“They all calmed down again after a while, and began to reflect it was no use crying for spilled milk. Of course, Mr. De Vere would have nothing to do with Jacquetta. Oh, no! not at all! He pooh-poohed the notion; said the marriage was null and illegal, and carried off his son by force. The girl of fifteen was as proud in her way as the stately old Englishman was in his. She let him go without a word, and never again breathed the subject to me; but oh, the delightful looks she used to favor me with—the little kite-heart!”



“Well?”

“Mr. Robert De Vere soon found he had reckoned without his host, when he thought he could get his son to give up his little bride. He became perfectly ungovernable, raved, foamed, shrieked like a wild beast, and called on Jacquetta night and day. In fact, there was no standing him at all, and nothing remained but to send for Jacquetta.”

“And you let her go?”

“Of course. I knew my own interests. So proud was she, that she would not have went a step with him, only out of pity for Aubrey. But go she did at last.”

“And that is how she came to live at Fontelle?”

“That is how. Her presence soothed him at once and, strange to say, she and Miss Augusta, then a haughty little lady of ten years, became fast friends. She had, as I told you, winning ways, and cast a spell over every one she met by a sort of wild fascination about her, and very soon she became the idol of the household, and almost as dear to the master of Fontelle as his own daughter.”

“So much the better! They will feel the parting with her the more.”

“Right! So they will. Mr. De Vere did not care to publish on the house-tops that he had a son a maniac; and as his paroxysms of madness were becoming daily more frequent and violent, one of the rooms in the old deserted north wing was fitted up with barred windows and bolted doors, and he was confined there. Old Tribulation, a woman of iron heart and nerves, became his nurse, and everything that could make him comfortable was given him. Even his fondness for music was thought of, and his organ was placed in his room, and remains there to this day; and before his fiercest attacks, he still favors them with a little unearthly music—most frequently at the dead of night.

“And that accounts for the strange noises,” said the captain, musingly.

“Yes. As it would have excited curiosity and inquiry to call Jacquetta *Mrs.* De Vere, the change to Miss was very easy and convenient; and, as few visitors called at Fontelle, repelled by the pride of the aristocratic De

Veres, people believed readily enough she was his younger daughter for she looks several years younger than Augusta—small fair people always do look younger than they are. And so—and so—she has lived there ever since; and that's all."

"And enough, by Jupiter! And so I'm a grandpapa—am I? Good gracious! I say, Grizzle, where's the child?"

She laughed, and continued stirring the fire.

"How dumb you are! Think a moment."

"Eh? Why—what? It's not little Orrie—is it?"

She nodded.

"Oh, Jehosaphat! here's a mare's nest! And little black-eyes is a grand-daughter of mine!"

"She has that honor."

"Whew! What will we hear next? And Jacquetta does not suspect?"

"I don't know. I half think she does, sometimes."

"She would claim her, if she did."

"No. She knows it would be no use. I could keep her in spite of her. She bears a shadowy resemblance to her mother, and has the same fiery temper, and the true De Vere face."

"And so she's a De Vere, too."

"Yes—and the heiress of Fontelle?"

"Well, this is something new. Do you mean to make this known as well as the rest?"

"Most decidedly."

"But what is the end of all this? It may mortify them to know I am her father; but they will not cast her off on that account."

"Trust me for that. I will see Mr. De Vere; and when I tell him Jacquetta knew everything I have told you all along, and artfully concealed it, you will see what a change it will make. You don't know yet how haughty these De Veres can be. Let him once learn what her mother was, and that Jacquetta herself knew it all along, although she denied it, and he would order her out in five minutes. He might get over the disgraceful stock from which she sprung, but her own deceit, never."

"Bravo! And then Madam Jacquetta will have to march!"

"Precisely! Oh, I'll fix her! Then, as her father, you can claim her, you know."

"But what if she won't be claimed? There's a small spice of the devil in that young lady, and it may tempt her to act ugly and cut up shines."

"What can she do? She can neither work nor starve. And her child will tie her hands. It needs only a word to convince her the child is hers. It will humiliate her to death, and Disbrowe's love will go out under the blow, like a candle under an extinguisher."

"Good? And then?"

"You can treat her as you please."

"By Jove! I'll treat her well, for she's a little brick," cried the captain, enthusiastically.

"You forget she conquered you."

"I'll forgive her that, once I get her. I've got money enough; and, by the Lord Harry, she and Miss Orrie shall live like a couple of ladies."

"You're a fool! She'll never own you."

"Wait till you see. I don't believe little Lelia can have changed so. But, look here, old lady; you told me De Vere had two sons—where's the other?"

"Oh, Heaven knows! Dead, I expect! He was carried off by Indians, when a child, and never heard of more."

"Well, it's astonishing how things turn up. And so my precious son-in-law is locked up in the old north tower of Fontelle?"

"Yes, and Tribulation has her hands full to look after him. They can always tell when he is getting violent, by his playing, and then Jacquetta has to go to him. She is the only one he will mind at such times. She locks him up and leaves him by himself, until he sees fit to be reasonable again; then he is released. It mostly happens in the dead of night; and the little lady has an uneasy time of it getting out of bed to see after him. Tribulation always clears on such occasions."

"And when is this delightful story to electrify your friends at Fontelle?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Am I to go with you?"

"Most certainly—to claim your daughter."

"Ha! ha! Won't there be a scene? I shan't sleep a wink to-night for thinking of it."

"Well, go now! I am done with you."

"A curt dismissal! Look here, Grizzle, I should like to see Orrie before I leave."

"Bah! What do you want to see her for?"

"Well, knowing that she is my grandchild, it strikes me I should like to take a good look at her. Come, old friend, be good-natured, and lead the way."

"Stuff! The child's asleep,"

"I won't awake her—I won't stay a moment."

"Nick Tempest, you're a fool!" said the woman, harshly, as she arose and took a candle. "Come, then, willful must have his way."

"*En avant, ma chere!*" said the captain, jocosely. "I follow."

She led the way up-stairs, and opened the door of a squalid little room, containing no furniture, but a straw-pallet in a little truckle-bed. The child lay stretched out—her black hair strewn about her; her hands clasped over her head; her small face, in its repose, bearing striking marks of her paternity.

Shading the light with his hand, Captain Nick bent over her, but he started back the next instant; for the great, black, goblin eyes were wide open, and piercing him like needles.

"You nasty old thing! What are you doing here? Get out!" said Orrie, sitting up in bed and brandishing the pillow, as the only defensive weapon at hand.

"Oh, you're awake—are you?" said Captain Nick. "Why, Orrie, don't you know me—Uncle Nick?"

"Uncle Nick!" said the child, contemptuously. "You ain't! I wouldn't have you for an uncle! Will you go away?"

"She's her mother's daughter!" said Grizzle, with a grim smile.

"Clear out." repeated Orrie, clutching the pillow, "or I'll heave this at you!"

"You little angel," said the captain, apostrophizing



her in a low tone. "What a blessed little seraph she is, Grizzle ! "

"Come away," said Grizzle. "I hope you are satisfied with your reception."

"Perfectly ! Good-night, Orrie."

Orrie's reply to this piece of politeness was an angry scowl, as she still sat threateningly holding the pillow, until the door closed after them.

"She does look like the De Veres," said the captain.

"And is blessed with her mother's dove-like temper, and her maternal grandparent's gentleness. Come back early to-morrow morning. Are you ready to go ? "

"Yes : if I must go. But as I have to return here to-morrow, could you not accommodate me with a shake-down before the fire for this night ? "

"No. I can do no such thing. I don't want you. There, be off ! "

"You hospitable old soul ! Well, good-night ! "

"Good-night," said the woman, in pretty much the same tone as if it were a curse she sent after him ; and then the door was bolted, and Grizzle Howlet was in and Nick Tempest was out, tramping back to the Mermaid, and musing intently on all he had heard that night.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A WOMAN'S NATURE.

"I am a woman—nay, a woman wronged !  
And when our sex from injuries take fire,  
Our softness turns to fury, and our thoughts  
Breathe vengeance and destruction."

—SAVAGE.

THE loud ringing of the breakfast-bell was the first thing that awoke Captain Alfred Disbrowe on the morning of his departure. For hours after his parting with Jacquetta, he had paced up and down his room, too miserable and angry to go to bed ; and it was only when the sky began to grow red in the east that he had flung himself down, dressed and all, and dropped into a feverish slumber.

He awoke with a strange feeling of loneliness and heaviness of heart, and it was some minutes before he could call to mind the cause. Then it came back to him with a shock and a thrill, that this was the last morning he would ever spend in Fontelle—the last time he would ever see Jacquetta. There was inexpressible bitterness in the thought, now that the excitement of the previous night had passed away, and he dropped his head on his hand with something like a groan. Her image was before him, bright, piquant, radiant—the slight, fairy form; the small, tantalizing, bewitching face; the laughing, mocking dark-gray eyes; the saucy, provoking smile; the round, polished, boyish forehead; the short, flashing, dancing curls, that shone before his eyes, now, as the most charming curls in existence; the whole-spirited, daring, sparkling little countenance of the intoxicating little siren, all arose, as if to madden him in their most bewildering array. He looked up at the smiling eyes and sweet, beautiful lips of the portrait above him, and remembered he had lost it all. Again his head dropped, and a cry that would not be repressed broke from his lips:

“Oh, Jacquetta! my love! my life! my dream! This—*this* is what I have lost!”

There was a knock at the door. He lifted his head, brushed back the heavy locks of his falling hair, and said:

“Come in.”

Frank entered. It reminded Disbrowe of the first day of his arrival, when he had paid him a similar visit. How short a time had elapsed since then! and yet it had transformed his whole life.

“Why, cousin Alfred, what’s the matter?” said Frank. “You look like a ghost.”

“I did not sleep well, last night,” said Disbrowe, glancing languidly in the glass, and starting to see the pale face it reflected. “Was that the breakfast-bell rung just now?”

“Yes, and as you are generally down so early in the morning, I thought perhaps you had taken a notion to run off in the night, being so late this morning. You didn’t turn in with your clothes on, did you? They look as if you had been sleeping in them a week.”

"I believe I did," said Disbrowe, smiling faintly. "I was up until daybreak. Are my uncle and cousins downstairs?"

There was a vague hope at his heart that he might see Jacquetta again, in spite of what she had told him; and he listened eagerly for Frank's answer.

"No," said that young gentleman, "Jack's gone. She was off this morning for a ten-mile ride, to visit one of these poor laborers who got both his legs crushed to pieces last evening—poor fellow! She would have went last night, I believe, only Lightning had lost a shoe."

With a sickening feeling of disappointment, Disbrowe arose and proceeded to arrange his disordered dress and brush his disheveled hair. So intense and bitter was the sensation, that it was some moments before he could trust himself to speak.

"Jack's a regular guardian-angel to one-half these poor people," continued Frank, now, as ever, disposed to sing the praises of his favorite, and quite unconscious that every word of praise was like a dagger to the heart of his cousin. "Let her hear of an accident, even though it should be fifty miles off, and if she thought she could be of the least service, she would be up and off in a twinkling, in spite of wind and weather. I remember once, when the typhus fever was raging at Green Creek, and carrying off the people in scores, she established herself as nurse-general, and scarcely took time to sleep or eat, but went from cottage to cottage, night and day. Uncle told her she was mad, and tried to prevail on her not to risk her life; but she wouldn't listen to him a moment. Her duty lay there, she said, and there she must be. For over four months, she never came to Fontelle, for fear of bringing the contagion; and I do believe she saved the lives of one-half the poor people there. Uncle gave her plenty of money; and, by George! if she didn't spend it!"

"And did she escape herself?"

"Oh, no! she took it when almost everybody else was well; but she recovered again. Her hair all fell out, too, and it has never grown long since."

"And this is what I have lost," again thought Disbrowe, in bitterness of spirit. "*This* is the girl I have

called heartless—this entrancing fairy, with the heart of a hero and an angel! Oh, Jacquetta! what have I done that I should lose you?”

“What *is* the matter?” said Frank, curiously. “Something more than a bad night’s rest, I’ll be bound! You look as if you had lost your best friend.”

“So I have!” said Disbrowe, passionately.

“Eh? what? Why, cousin Alfred, is Lord Earnecliffe dead?”

“Not as I know of. I hope not.”

“Then what the—I thought he was, by your saying that.”

“Never mind, Frank; you are five years too young to understand what I mean. Heaven grant you never may understand it!”

Frank looked at him an instant with a peculiar smile, and then began to whistle, with piercing emphasis, the grand march in “Norma.” Disbrowe paused in his occupation, and looked at him a moment with a singular expression.

“You, too, Frank,” he said, with a slight smile; “are you in the secret, too?”

“What secret?” said Frank, with a look of innocent unconsciousness. “Don’t understand, Captain Disbrowe. I’m five years too young to know any secrets.”

Captain Disbrowe returned to his toilet.

“I forgot you were a Yankee, and consequently wide-awake. Has Jacquetta”—his face flushed as he uttered her name—“told you anything?”

“No. What would she tell me? I don’t understand you at all, cousin Alfred.”

Frank’s look of resolute simplicity was refreshing to see. Disbrowe made an impatient gesture.

“You understand well enough. Out with it!”

“Well, then, I know you’re in love with our Jack,” blurted out Master Frank, thrusting both hands in his pockets. “All of my own knowledge, too, if I *am* five years too young to know anything.”

Evidently youth was a sore spot with Frank, like all boys ambitious to be thought men. Disbrowe’s face grew crimson one moment and whiter than ever the next.



He went on dressing without speaking a word, and Frank evidently possessed by some spirit of evil, continued, undauntedly :

“And I know she refused you, too—you and your coronet, Captain Disbrowe, as she has many a bet—another man. Oh, our Jack’s not to be had for a word, I can tell you ! The man that gets her must do something more than pay her compliments, or give her flowers, or say sweet things by moonlight.”

“What must he do ? Take lance and shield, and ride forth, booted and spurred, like a second Don Quixote, in search of adventures ; conquer a fiery dragon, or rescue some hapless prince from the enchanted castle of some gigantic ogre ?” said Disbrowe, between anger and sarcasm.

“Yes, sir-ee !” exclaimed Frank, defiantly. “If such things were to be done now, the man that would lay claim to her pretty little haud would have to prove his knight-hood before he would kneel at her footstool. As it is, the man that comes after her will have to mind his P’s and Q’s before he gets her ; for Jack De Vere is no common milk-and-water young lady, but worth half the women in the world—queens and princesses included—rolled into one.”

“That is all, doubtless, very true,” said Disbrowe, with a curling lip ; “but I fancy I know some one who—”

He paused abruptly, and bit his lip.

“Oh, you may go on. I know who you mean. You think she’s in love with Jacinto—don’t you ?” said Frank, sarcastically.

“Really, Master Frank, you seem in a catechizing mood this morning,” said Disbrowe, facing round and fixing his dark eyes full upon him. “Supposing we drop this subject. Our friend, Miss Jacquetta, might not thank either of us for so free a use of her name.”

Frank blushed at the rebuke, which he could not help feeling he deserved, and in a spirit of retaliation began humming : “A frog he would a wooing go,” as they left the room.

Disbrowe smiled as he heard him ; and, letting his hand fall on his shoulder, said, cordially :

"Come, Master Frank, it is not worth while for you and I to disagree, as this is the last morning I will ever trouble you. We must part friends, my dear boy."

"That we shall, cousin Alfred!" exclaimed Frank, shaking earnestly the proffered hand; "and I do like you first rate; and I wish you *had* got Jack. Now, then!"

"Thank you! but your wish comes rather too late; I am not likely to win such a prize in Love's lottery. Tell her, Frank," he said, with a look of strange earnestness in his dark, handsome eyes, "to forget all I may have said to offend her; and tell her that my best wishes go with her and whoever may be so fortunate as to win the heart and hand she refused me. Tell her this, Frank, my dear fellow, since I am not destined to see her again."

Frank wrung his hand silently; for his voice at that moment was not altogether under his command.

Both entered the breakfast parlor together, where Augusta, Jacinto, and Mr. De Vere sat awaiting them.

Augusta sat the same figure of stone that she always was of late; but the change the past few days had wrought in her never struck Disbrowe so forcibly as it did this morning. She had lost flesh and life, and color; she was the shadow of her former self. Her tall, stately form was wasted and thin; her cheeks hollow; her lofty brow death-like in its blue-veined pallor; her lips were white; and her hands so pale and wasted that they looked almost transparent. The old story of the vampire sucking the life-blood drop by drop, seemed realized in her case; and oh! the unspeakable depth of desolation and despair in those great, heavy midnight eyes. And something worse than desolation and despair was in that haggard face, now—**REMORSE**, undying, devouring remorse—the worm that never sleeps, seemed gnawing her heart—had set his white, fearful seal on that corpse-like face.

She lifted her eyes slowly, as they entered; and meeting his gaze, so full of pity and compassion, the old haughty pride of the De Veres, that even her night of anguish could not quench, sent a momentary fire leaping to her eyes, and a lofty look to the white face that repelled and cast off fiercely all commiseration.

Mr. De Vere put down the book he was reading,

and came forward to greet him; and Jacinto, who sat caressing a beautiful little water-spaniel—a pet of Jacquetta's—glanced up and met a look full of angry jealousy from the young Englishman's dark eyes that made him drop his own and flush to the temples.

Mr. De Vere apologized in a few words for Jacquetta's absence; and they all gathered around the breakfast table. The meal passed almost in silence, and sadly enough, too; for all were thinking it was the last the young guardsman would partake of beneath that roof; and until that moment they had not known how he had endeared himself to them. There would be a dreary gap when his tall, gallant form, and gay, handsome young face was gone, that would not be easily filled in the family circle. Had Jacquetta been there, the oppressive silence would soon have been broken! but she was "over the hills and far away," long before this, and doubtless—as Disbrowe thought—forgetful of his very existence.

"Which way do you go?" inquired Mr. De Vere, at length—making an effort at something like conversation.

"I will call at the Mermaid, and take passage from there in some schooner, as I wish to take sketches of the scenery as I go along, which, I understand, is very fine along the Hudson."

"None better," said Mr. De Vere. "I have climbed the proud Alps, I have sailed down the Rhine, as the song has it, but I have never seen anything to surpass this new country scenery. You ought to see these American forests in autumn, decked in their Joseph's coat of many colors. You would never forget it. It goes ahead of Old England completely in that point."

"I have always understood it was very fine," said Disbrowe; "but, unhappily, I will not be able to see it. I hope to be shooting in Fontelle woods before that."

The door opened as he spoke, and a servant appeared with a startled face.

"Well, Reynolds?" said Mr. De Vere looking up.

"She's here again, sir!" said Reynolds, excitedly, "and she won't go away, all we can do. She says she *will* see you, in spite of us all!"

"Who are you talking about?—who is *she*? Don't be so incoherent, Reynolds."

"It's old Mother Howlet, sir, if you please—and there's a man along with her—and she won't go away."

Augusta uttered a faint exclamation, and sunk back in her chair.

Mr. De Vere arose, his face flushed with anger.

"Mother Howlet! How dare she come here! Order her away, Reynolds, and say I will *not* see her."

"We have, sir, but she won't go. The man along with her has got a pistol, and he says he will shoot the first of us that tries to keep them out."

"Who is the fellow?"

"Don't know, sir. He's a short, thick-set, man, with red hair and whiskers, and a savage face."

"Captain Nick Tempest," simultaneously exclaimed Jacinto, Disbrowe, and Frank.

"The fellow who tried to shoot you that evening Jacinto was wounded?" asked Mr. De Vere.

"The same."

"Really," said Mr. De Vere, angry, "Fontelle seems to be a rendezvous for desperadoes of late. Come, Reynolds, I will go with you to this worthy pair, and we will see if they cannot be got rid of."

"You had better be careful, my dear sir," said Disbrowe, anxiously. "This Captain Tempest is a most sanguinary villain, and capable of any crime, I believe."

"Then he will find that Fontelle is not in the habit of sheltering sanguinary villains, nor its master of being bullied into listening to what they have to say."

And, preceded by Reynolds, Mr. De Vere left the room.

"What the dickens can bring those two here?" exclaimed the astonished Frank.

"That is a question I cannot take it upon myself to answer," said Disbrowe; "for no good, you may safely swear. They must have the audacity of the old demon himself to come here. Are you ill, Miss Augusta? You look alarmed."

"Oh, no."

She was sitting gazing at the door, with a look so



strained and unnatural that it startled them. Jacinto, too, was white, as if with apprehension, and shrunk from the eyes of all. Moment after moment passed—a quarter of an hour went by, but still Mr. De Vere did not return.

“What can detain uncle!” exclaimed Frank. “They can’t have done anything to him, can they? Suppose I ring and see?”

No one objected; and, seizing the bell-pull, he rung a peal that presently brought Reynolds into the room.

“Have those two old trampers gone?” asked Frank.

“No, Master Frank; they’re both here yet.”

“The dickens they are! Where’s uncle?”

“In the morning-parlor with Mother Howlet.”

“Oh! ginger!” exclaimed the overwhelmed Frank, “there’s a piece of news! Where’s Captain Tempest?”

“Sitting in the hall, smoking.”

“Smoking! there’s coolness for you, ladies and gents! You may go, Reynolds.”

Reynolds bowed and withdrew, and the quartet looked at each other in silent amaze. Augusta leaned on her elbow, and dropped her head on her hand, but not before they had seen how fearfully agitated her face was. Jacinto, alternately pale and red, got up and sat down, and seemingly could rest nowhere. Captain Disbrowe looked calmly surprised, and Master Frank gave vent to his feelings by whistling, and with his hands in his pockets marched up and down the room to the tune of the “Rogue’s March.”

An hour passed, and all were wrought up to a state of almost intolerable suspense. “I wish uncle would come—I do wish he would,” Frank had repeated for the fiftieth time, when at last the door was opened, and Mr. De Vere entered, closely followed by Grizzle Howlet and Captain Nick Tempest.

A score of questions were on Frank’s lips; but they froze there, as he looked on his uncle’s face. The stern and relentless face of an outraged Spartan father, carved in marble, might have looked as his did at that moment. A dusky fire was in his eye, and his lips were compressed as in a vise. The faces of Captain Nick and his fair friend bore an unmistakable look of triumphant malice, as they coolly helped themselves to seats. Captain Nick

bowed politely all around, in bland amiability—even to Captain Disbrowe; for there is nothing makes us more amiable for the time being than the consciousness that we are about to have complete revenge. Augusta shook in mortal terror from meeting the eye of old Grizzle, and shrunk away in a recess of the window, shaking like one in an ague-fit. A sinister smile parted the thin lips of that lady, as she saw it; and she exchanged an exultant look with the gallant commander of the “Fly-by-Night.”

“Frank,” said Mr. De Vere, turning to his nephew, “do you know in what particular direction Jacquetta has gone?”

Frank started and stared. There was a sharp ringing tone in his uncle’s voice, that was never heard there save when his anger was at its height. It was seldom Mr. De Vere was really angry; but when he was, he was almost relentless in his stern passion.

“No, sir—that is, yes, sir—she has gone to Red Rock.”

“Do you know what time she will return?”

“No, sir; perhaps not before night.”

Mr. De Vere seized the bell, and rung furiously. Reynolds again appeared.

“Reynolds, go and tell William to saddle Firefly—that is the fastest horse, I believe—and bring him round, instantly, to the front door!”

Reynolds flew to obey, wondering inwardly what was up, and then turning to the astonished Frank, said, peremptorily:

“Mount instantly, and be off for Jacquetta! Tell her she is to return with you immediately—*immediately*, mind! Lose not a moment going or coming. Go!”

Frank started to his feet, more in dismay than in obedience; but there was that in his uncle’s face that repelled inquiry, and extorted compliance.

“Just tell her I want her! You need not say who is here. It is as well to take her unprepared,” he said, lowering his voice.

“That’s so, Mr. De Vere!” exclaimed Captain Tempest, whose keen ears overheard him.

“Silence, sir!” said Mr. De Vere, fiercely. “Learn to hold your tongue when a gentleman speaks!” Then,

turning to Frank, he said: "What are you waiting for, sir? be off; and mind, don't let the grass grow under your feet!"

Frank, so violently astonished that he scarcely knew whether he was waking or dreaming, seized his cap, and darted out of the room. Captain Tempest arose, his face red with anger.

"Do you mean to say, sir," he began, turning savagely to Mr. De Vere, when a hand seized his arm, and he was forced back into his chair.

"Why will you be a fool," said Grizzle, angrily in Spanish; "sit down and wait! Your revenge is coming!"

A moment's silence fell on all. Captain Tempest scowled, Mr. De Vere walked to the window, and stood like a statue, and Disbrowe pulled out his watch, and looked at the hour.

"Time I was off," he said, starting up. "My dear uncle, can I see you a moment in private, before I go?"

"You must postpone your journey for to-day, Alfred!" said his uncle, imperiously. "There is a certain family affair to be discussed here, presently, at which I require your presence. Your journey can wait, so sit down!"

Jacinto started to his feet.

"Then I will not intrude," he said; "I will go!"

"You will stay!" interposed Mr. De Vere, sternly. "Sit down, sir; perhaps we may find your presence necessary before we have done!"

The boy turned white, even to his lips.

"I beg, sir," he began, falteringly; but Mr. De Vere turned almost fiercely upon him.

"Sit down, sir! You shall do as I tell you. Perhaps we may make you give a better account of yourself before you go! Sit down!"

The lad reeled, and fell back into a seat, like one fainting.

All this time Augusta had cowered in her seat, shuddering, trembling, collapsed. Now she lifted her white face, and rising to her feet, she turned to Grizzle, and gasped rather than said:

"Have you—have you—broken your promise? Have

you told—?” her voice died away, and she shivered, convulsively.

The old, evil smile came over Grizzle's face, as she fixed her piercing eyes on the young girl's ghastly face, and quietly replied :

“No, Lady Augusta, I have not told ! Your secret is safe, at least, for the present ; I do not care to blacken my lips just yet by telling it, nor scorch your father's ears by the hearing. Fear not for the present ; you are safe.”

She sunk back, and dropped her white face in her white hands. Mr. De Vere, standing stern and motionless, if he heard, heeded not ; and Jacinto, whose emotion was evidently one of intense terror—rather surprising in one who a short time before had fearlessly risked his life to save another's—cowered down on his seat, and did not dare to look up, while a streak of dark red at intervals flashed across his dark face. Disbrowe, astonished and troubled, yet with a heart thrilling at the thought that he was to see Jacquetta again, looked uneasily from face to face. Old Grizzle, with her gray cloak folded closely around her, sat with a grim, sinister smile glittering in her snake-like eyes, and wrinkling her thin lips. And Captain Tempest, lolling back in his chair, elevated his legs on another, clapping wedge of the Virginia weed in his mouth, stuck his hands in his coat-pockets, and looked the very picture of *nonchalance* and high-bred self-possession.

And hours passed !

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### LITTLE ORRIE.

“In truth she was a strange and wayward child,  
Fond of each gentle and each dreadful scene,  
In darkness and in storm, and winter wild.”

—BEATTIE.

AN hour before daybreak, that morning, Jacquetta was in the saddle, and off on her mission of mercy. She, too, had passed a sleepless night ; and the bitterest tears perhaps she had ever shed in her life, had fallen from her eyes.



Jacquetta rarely wept like other girls, even in trouble—she seldom could—she mostly sat like a stone, till the pain at her heart wore itself out; but the look in Disbrowe's eyes, as she left him, had moved her strangely, and her tears had fallen more for him than herself.

That he loved her truly, she could not doubt; and a "still small voice," far down in her heart, whispered that she loved him, too. She shrunk in horror from that voice—she shrunk from herself—she would not hear it; there was guilt in listening to it for a moment. She would not have seen him again for worlds; she would not look in his dark, pleading eyes, lest it should make her traitor-heart betray her; and she would have torn it out, and hurled it from her, had it been in her power, first. And yet there was inexpressible pain in the thought of his forgetting her altogether; worse, of believing her in love with another—this small boy! How she despised herself that any one should believe her capable of being bewildered by the first handsome face she met.

It would have been a sweet drink to Disbrowe to know the restless, miserable night she had passed, and how eagerly she had longed for morning when, on Lightning's back, she might fly over the hills, as she longed to fly from herself. And before that morning came, she was off and away, forgetting, in her rapid, exciting gallop, the rebellious rising and throbbing and aching of her woman's heart.

Her way led her within half a mile of the lone inn; and to her surprise, the first object she beheld, as she neared it, was little Orrie, leaping, springing, flying over the rocks like one possessed.

"Hallo, Orrie!" she called, reining in her horse, as the child stopped to look at her. "You here? What are you doing?"

"Nothing," said Orrie, composedly.

"Where are you going?"

"Nowhere."

"Who's at home?"

"No one."

"Where's Grizzle?"

"Don't know."

"Satisfactory answers," said Jacquetta, laughing.  
"Will you come for a ride, Orrie?"

"Yes."

"Here, then, mount."

Orrie took the hand she extended, and sprung before her into the saddle. And Jacquetta again darted off.

"Where are you going?" asked the child.

"Only a little way from here—to Red Rock."

"Is that nice young gentleman at Fontelle, yet?"

"Yes," said Jacquetta, flushing violently.

"Ain't he nice? Oh! I do love him! Don't you love him, too?" asked Orrie, looking up in her face.

"See how fast Lightning goes; watch him jump over that gulley!" said Jacquetta, eagerly.

Of course Orrie was all animation.

"Are you not afraid when we go so fast?"

"Afraid!" said Orrie, contemptuously. "No; I guess I ain't! I love to go fast!"

"You love a good many things—don't you?" said Jacquetta.

"Yes; I guess I do! There's Red Rock! Whose house are you going to?"

"Briggs'."

"Oh, yes; old Jake Briggs got his legs smashed off! I heard Kit telling Blaize it. Are you going to fix 'em for him?"

"I wish I could," said Jacquetta, as she leaped lightly off, and gave her hand to Orrie to spring. "But I am afraid it is beyond me. Come in."

A boy came out and took her horse, as though it was quite a matter of course to see Miss De Vere there. Jacquetta went in with Orrie to the cottage, where, on a bed, lay the prostrate form of the unfortunate Briggs—life almost extinct.

A woman was bending over him, crying and wringing her hands; four or five children were crouched round a smoky fire, in loud lamentations—some for their father, and some for pieces of bread.

Jacquetta's presence stilled them all for a moment—even the mother. A doctor had been sent for, and was expected every instant; so she turned to the children and

quieted them by distributing unlimited slices of bread and butter, an unfailing cure generally for the afflictions of childhood. Orrie declined taking any, and sat with her black, elfish eyes riveted, as if fascinated, on the distorted face of the maimed man. Jacquetta strove to console the woman; replenished the smoky fire until it burned brightly; put the disordered room in rights, and made herself generally useful, until the arrival of the doctor. He came in about an hour—pronounced the case hopeless; spoke pleasantly to Jacquetta, and called her a good little girl; hoped she would make her father do something for the family; chucked Orrie under the chin, and inquired the latest news from the land of the goblins; and put on his gloves and departed.

Noon approached, and Jacquetta was just trying her hand at getting dinner for the children, when the furious clatter of horse's hoofs brought her to the door; and she saw Frank panting, flushed, breathless, standing before her.

"Well, Master Frank, what now?" she demanded.

"Oh, Jack! you're to come right straight home! Uncle says so—he sent me after you! There's the old dickens to pay at Fontelle!"

Jacquetta looked at him in calm astonishment.

"Come right straight home? Why, what's wrong?"

"Don't know, I'm sure—everything is! Old Grizzle Howlet's there, and old Nick Tempest; and uncle's in a regular downright state of mind, if ever you saw him in one!"

"What sort of a state of mind?"

"A blamed angry one! Come, hurry up! I shouldn't wonder if they were all assassinating one another by this time. Uncle told me not to say old Grizzle and Captain Tempest were there; but I couldn't hold in."

"Not to tell me? Really! Is—is Captain Disbrowe there?" she asked, hesitatingly.

"He was, when I left! Come—make haste!"

"I will be back in a moment," said Jacquetta, hurrying in to get her hat, and take her departure.

Orrie, hearing Frank's voice, came out, to his great amazement; but a few words explained how she got

there. And the young gentleman swung her up before him, and announced his intention of carrying her off to Fontelle.

"Will you?" cried Orrie, delighted; "that's you! I want to see that nice captain again."

"It's the last time you'll see him, then, for one while," said Frank, "for he's going away to-day."

"Going where?"

"Oh! ever so far away! To a place called England—a small little island they have over there."

"And when will he come back?"

"Never, I expect," said Frank, sententiously. "So begin and tear your hair, and rend your garments as soon as you like."

Orrie's face grew so blank at the news, that Frank had to laugh; but at that moment Jacquetta mounted, and they both dashed off together.

"What on earth can they ever want with me, Frank?" she asked.

"How the mischief do I know? Something awful's up, I've no doubt!"

"And papa told you not to tell me they were there?"

"Yes!"

"Well, it's strange, I must say; but time will tell; and so I don't object to a small surprise."

And she laughed, and hummed:

"Romance for me, romance for me,  
And a nice little bit of mystery."

"I rather calculate it won't be a very pleasant surprise when you do hear it," said Frank. "Old Grizzle looked as if she meant mischief."

"She generally means that."

"And she and uncle had a long confab together in the nursery-room."

"Indeed?"

"And when he came in he looked like a thunder-cloud! like the picture of that old thingymajig in the library, you know—that old Roman brick that killed his daughter!"

"Perhaps it was something about Augusta!"



"Don't know—it might ; but then, what can they want of you in such a tremendous hurry ?"

"Very true ! Well, there is no use troubling ourselves about it till we get there. Orrie, are you not afraid to go to Fontelle, and old Grizzle there ?"

"No," said Orrie ; "I must see the captain ; and she may beat me if she likes ; but I will !"

"What a lady-killer he is—eh, Jack ?" said Frank, laughing.

"What do you want to see him for ?" said Jacquetta, coloring slightly, and not noticing Frank's remarks.

"Oh ! I want to ask him to take me with him—he said, perhaps he would."

Frank laughed uproariously at the very idea of the thing ; and then, as the rapid pace at which they went precluded conversation, they relapsed into silence and galloped swiftly along.

Some time in the afternoon they reached Fontelle. As they entered the hall they met Reynolds.

"I say, Reynolds," said Frank, taking him by the button, "are all the good folks in the parlor yet ?"

"Yes, Master Frank."

"Is uncle there ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nursing his wrath to keep it warm !" laughed Jacquetta, as she tripped along, and opening the parlor-door entered, followed by Frank and little Orrie.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### A PROUD HEART CRUSHED.

"When I am cold, when my pale sheeted corse  
Sleeps the dark sleep no venom'd tongue can wake,  
List not to evil thoughts of her whose lips  
Have then no voice to plead."

—MATURIN'S BERTRAM.

THE group in the parlor had scarcely changed their positions since the morning, except that Captain Tempest, overcome by the silence and watching, had fallen asleep, and now snored audibly. Luncheon had been served ;

for, even in his anger, Mr. De Vere could not forget hospitality ; but no one had touched it save Grizzle and her companion.

Mr. De Vere, with his arms folded across his chest, sat moodily in his elbow-chair, and Augusta and Jacinto still maintained their drooping, dejected position.

Jacquetta's keen eyes took it all in at a glance, and then advancing toward Mr. De Vere, she began :

" You sent for me, papa—"

" One moment, young lady !" interposed Mr. De Vere, sternly, sitting upright. " Do not speak, if you please—at least for the present—only in answer to my questions. Ah ! how came this child here ? "

Grizzle uttered an exclamation at the same time, as little Orrie entered with Frank ; but that young lady paid not the slightest attention to either. Darting her bright, black eyes hither and thither until they rested on Disbrowe, who was in the act of laying aside the book he had been reading, she darted forward, according to her usual fashion, flung her arms around his neck, and fell to kissing him rapturously.

Jacquetta who had first started at her father's address, and fixed her clear, penetrating eyes full on his face, in calm surprise, now recovered herself, and said, quietly :

" If that question is addressed to me, I found her playing near the old inn, and took her with me to Red Rock, and from thence home, by her own desire."

" Home !" said Mr. De Vere, with a slight sneer. " How know you this is her home ? "

" I did not say it was ! She wished to see Captain Disbrowe, and I brought her here to my home for that purpose."

" Ah ! You are very fond of the child, doubtless ? "

" I like her—yes, sir."

" You *like* her ! Nothing more ? "

" I do not understand you, papa."

" We will drop that title, if you please. Until certain matters are cleared up, I am not at all ambitious to hear it from your lips."

Two red spots, like twin tongues of flame, leaped to the cheeks of Jacquetta, and she passed her hand over

her brow in a bewildered sort of way. Disbrowe's face flushed, and he bit his lips until it was bloodless. Augusta and Jacinto looked up, and fixed their eyes on Mr. De Vere in utter amazement. A smile and significant glance passed between Grizzle and Captain Nick. Frank's eyes flashed ; and even little Orrie, perching her head on one side, looked from one to the other, as if trying to understand what all this meant. Mr. De Vere's face was growing sterner and darker every moment ; for, as she stood there before him, there was little difficulty in tracing the strong resemblance between her and Nick Tempest. Jacquetta was proud—too proud to let any one there present see how keenly she felt the insult ; so drawing her small, slight figure up to its full height, she bowed and said coldly :

“As you please, sir.”

“I might not so much object to hearing it myself,” said Mr. De Vere, in the same slightly-sneering tone he had before used—more galling to hear, by far, than an angry one would have been ; “but there is another gentleman present who has a better claim than I do to that dutiful title ; perhaps he may be jealous of being robbed of his due.”

“I do not understand you, sir.”

“Oh, fire away ! Don't mind me,” exclaimed Captain Nick with a wave of his hand, “I shan't be jealous ! All in good time, you know.”

“Perhaps you understand *now*, young lady !” sneered Mr. De Vere.

“I do not, sir. May I ask you to explain ?”

“Explain what ?”

“This singular scene. What have I to do with these people ?” and she pointed to Captain Nick and his lady-friend.

“Oh, come now, Jacquetta, my girl—or, Lelia, rather—you may as well leave off your airs at once. Old Grizzle's split, and so it's no use carrying things with a high hand any longer,” said Captain Tempest, in a loud tone of voice.

“No, Jacquetta ! It's too late ; the play is played out,” said Grizzle. “I have told Mr. De Vere all, and it is of no use for you to add any more falsehoods to the rest.”

"And so you may as well strike your colors and surrender at once, my little firebrand!" said Captain Nick.

Jacquetta turned her flashing eyes from one to the other, and her small hands clinched as though she could have sprung on them both like a wounded panther, on the spot; but after a moment's scrutiny, her mood changed, and she turned away with a curling lip, as though she thought them unworthy of her notice.

"May I ask, sir," she repeated, turning almost imperiously to Mr. De Vere, "for an explanation of all this? Was I brought here to be publicly disgraced before a mixed crowd like this?"

"Really, madam, you must be careful how you talk! If by 'mixed crowd' you mean those two worthy folks behind you, the term is slightly disrespectful to one of them at least," said Mr. De Vere.

"Heavens! will no one tell me what this means? Am I an idiot to be treated like this?" she demanded, with a passionate stamp of her foot.

"Why, I have just told you, my little duck!" said Captain Nick. "It means the fat's in the fire; the cat's out of the bag; that you've put your foot in it; that you've got to the end of your tether; and old Grizzle, thinking you might bolt the ropes, has given you a short pull up. I admire your pluck, upon my soul I do! and can see with half an eye you're your father's daughter, every inch of you; so you had better acknowledge the corn, and come to terms at once. I dare say it won't be pleasant, at first—most especially in that young gent's presence over there; but he'll know it sooner or later, so you might just as well drop your mask, and sail under your own flag for the future. You're a tip-top little brick, my little girl, and I swan you ought to be a lady, in spite of the old saying that you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. You remind me of a young colt, my dear," said captain, with a touch of philosophy; and giving his arm a wave by way of directing attention to the peroration. "As soon as the bridle and curb is first put on, after it has been allowed to run loose round the pasture all its life, it kicks up its heels and grows restive, and plunges, and struggles, and raises a devil of a row gen-



erally (saving your presence, ladies and gents, for naming my friend in your company); but still it has to submit, and finally settles down into a capital beast of burden, in the long run. And so, my bright little flash of lightning, you will have to tame down to a common tallow candle, and burn under a shade at that; and you may as well come to terms now as ever."

All the time Captain Nick had been thus eloquently delivering himself, the clear, bright, penetrating eyes of Jacquetta had been fixed on his face—riveted there with such a steady, unwinking gaze, that when that gallant mariner had concluded, and, looking up, met the piercing, burning, fixed scrutiny, he gave an uneasy start, shifted in his chair, tried to stare back, but failed, and finally burst out again in a bullying tone:

"Oh come, Jack De Vere! none o' that! I can stand a good deal, but I never was acquainted with Job, and ain't much like him in disposition; so I'm uncommon apt to flare up when provoked! It's disrespectful, too, as the old gent over there told you a little while ago and,—"

"I beg you will not allude to me," said Mr. De Vere, haughtily. "With you, sir, I have nothing to do, and the seldomer you refer to me the better!"

Captain Nick sprung to his feet in rage.

"Why you darned old aristocrat! do you mean to say I'm not as good a man as any De Vere among you that ever had his head struck on a pole over London Bridge as a traitor. I tell you, my old cove! you'll find yourself in the wrong box if you attempt to bully me!"

"By heaven, sir! do you dare to speak to my uncle like this?" fiercely exclaimed Disbrowe starting to his feet.

"Yes, my young grandee; and to you, too. Mind your own business, sir, and speak when you're spoken to. I have a little private account to settle with you, before you go home to see your dear Norma, and tell her you amused yourself making love to another man's wife all the time you were in America!"

There was something in the last words that struck them all dumb. With a low, irrepressible cry, Jacquetta reeled, fell on a sofa, with both hands clasped over her heart. How well Disbrowe knew that gesture now!

"Ah! you *can* feel—you *can* suffer! That bolt goes home to your proud heart, my lady!" said Captain Nick, triumphantly.

"Oh, my heart! what does all this mean! Oh! will no one tell me?" cried Jacquetta, passionately. "What have I said—what have I done to be treated like this?"

"Ask that heart you have named. Let it disclose your guilt!" said Mr. De Vere, between grief and rage. "I should blush to speak it!"

Up to her feet she sprung, with the fearful bound of the aroused tigress—her eyes flashing fire—her lips and cheeks white as ashes.

"Guilt—ashamed! Mr. De Vere, I *command* you to tell me of what I am accused!" she said, fiercely.

"What an actress was lost in you, Miss Jack!" said the captain, with a sneer.

"Now, Jacquetta, it's of no use," said Grizzle, in a wheedling tone. "You know just as well as he does what it means, and it is only a waste of good tragedy to rant and fire up like this. How often have you told me that you dreaded this day, and implored me on your knees not to tell what I have told? Calm yourself, and be reasonable. You may as well acknowledge your true father, and drop all this nonsense at once. It imposes on no one now."

"That's the chat!" said the captain.

She looked from one to the other, like a wounded deer with the hounds at his throat.

"Oh, my God! we are all sinners, and none more unworthy than I. But what have I done to deserve this!"

There was a passionate solemnity in her tone that thrilled through every heart. Disbrowe rose, as white as herself.

"This is base—this is unmanly—this is cruel! If she were on trial for life, she would be told her crime, and allowed to defend herself. Will you not give her the same privilege as a public malefactor?"

"She knows well enough it's all sham!" said Grizzle, harshly. "She can play Persecuted Innocence to perfection!"

"Come! I'll ask her a question," said Captain Nick,

in his bullying tone. "Right about face, Miss or Madame Jacquetta. Look at *me*—look at me well!"

"I am looking, sir!"

"Well; do you know me? Come, now, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, you do! Mar kthat, Mr. De Vere. Who am I, then?"

"Captain Nick Tempest—the greatest villain unhung!"

The answer was so unexpected—so completely different from anything he had looked for, that the gallant captain sunk back in his chair, and stared at her, perfectly unable to utter a word.

Grizzle Howlet "grinned horribly a ghastly smile" of triumph over her old enemy, and muttered;

"Her father's daughter, indeed! Pluck to the last!"

And, Frank, who had hitherto stood a silent and wondering spectator, called out, delightedly:

"That's you, Jack; hit him again!"

Mr. De Vere's brow grew, if possible, a shade more stern than it had been before.

"Do you know to whom you are speaking, mistress? Let him be ever so great a villain, it is your duty to be respectful. If you think to raise yourself in my estimation by any display like this, you are greatly mistaken in me, young lady! I cannot cease to forget as easily as you can, that there is a commandment which says, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord shall give."

"I have not tried to raise myself in your estimation, Mr. De Vere. I never yet sued for the good opinion of any one, and I shall not begin now! Neither can I see how the command just quoted can apply to the present case in the remotest degree."

"Do you mean to say," said Mr. De Vere, rising to his feet, and sternly confronting her, "that you do not know that man?"

She met his angry gaze unflinchingly.

"I mean to say no such thing, sir! I do know him quite as well as I am anxious to know him, or any one of his class."

"Take care we are not better acquainted before long, my pretty little dear! 'Any one of his class,' forsooth! To what class do you belong, if it comes to that, my high and mighty little princess royal!" sneered the captain.

"You prevaricate, young lady. Will you tell me in what relation he stands to you?"

"That's it! You have her now, squire! Drive her into the corner, where she can't dodge!" cried the captain, delightedly.

"Silence, fellow!" angrily exclaimed Mr. De Vere. "I await your answer, madam."

"I do not understand you, sir. Do you mean to say that that man is any relation to me?"

"That is an Irish way of answering my question, and looks very much like shuffling evasion! Now, I will put the question direct. I suppose you do not need to be told that I am not your father!"

Her face turned dark-crimson for an instant, and then whiter than before.

"I mean not your own father," he observed, hastily.

"No, sir."

There was a simultaneous exclamation from Jacinto, Disbrowe and Frank; but, no one noticed them, and Mr. De Vere went on:

"Then, as every one has a father, living or dead, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me who yours really is?"

"It is late to ask that question. You know as much of the matter as I do!"

Captain Tempest whistled.

"Then you deny all knowledge of your father?"

"I do, sir. I know of no such person in the world!"

"Oh, Jacquetta!" exclaimed old Grizzle, holding up her hands in holy horror.

"What do you mean, you hag—you murderess—you second Jezebel?" exclaimed Jacquetta, turning furiously upon her. "Do you dare to say I lie?"

And she glared upon her like a young lioness, ready to spring.

"Jacquetta De Vere, you know you do!" said Grizzle, boldly.



"Come, madam, no savage outbursts of passion here," sternly interposed Mr. De Vere. "When your leave Fontelle, you may take to fisticuffs as soon as you please; but, you will be good enough, both of you, to restrain your natural inclinations in my presence. Once again—and for the last time, Jacquetta—do you mean to say that you do not know who your father is?"

"I do not. By heaven and all its hosts, I swear it!" she passionately cried.

"Then, behold him here!" exclaimed Mr. De Vere, pointing to Captain Tempest, who arose to his feet, triumphant. "Oh, falsest of the false! that you whom I believed the soul of frankness and honor, could be guilty of such mean deception as this! And, to think, that I should have been so poor a dupe, to be fooled by a smiling face and a smooth tongue! Oh! never till now did I realized 'how fair an outside falsehood hath!'"

There was a cry from all, and a unanimous rising to their feet. Jacquetta stood like one petrified—turned to stone. Mr. De Vere sternly waved them back, and went on:

"Your very countenance convicts you; for you have your father's face! And, to think I should have ever cherished the spawn of such a viper! to think that you could have known this and acted a living lie all these years under my very eyes!—that you should have held secret meetings with this man, and given him money—my money—pilfered from me, to pay him and this wretched old woman to keep your secret! Had you told me he was your father in time, I might even have overlooked the disgrace of having the child of such a wretch connected with my family; but, now I can never believe, or trust, or forgive you! The daughter of such a father—of such a mother, bearing my name! Oh! how indeed have I fallen, when I have lived to see such a day!"

He strode up and down the room, like one beside himself with grief and rage, and humiliation. Still she stood like one turned to stone—mute, voiceless, motionless. She had a vague expectation of something terrible, but nothing like this. She passed her hand over her eyes, like one in a dream.

"Come, Jacquetta, have done with this," said Captain Nick, roughly. "We have had enough of this fooling. I'm your father, and that's the end of it. And, what's more, you know it, and there is no use trying to back out. Come, be a good girl, and don't be ashamed of the old man who is ready to stand by you while there is a shot in the locker, or a timber of this old hunk hangs together."

His voice aroused her from her trance, and, looking at him fixedly, she turned to Grizzle, and said, calmly:

"*You* ought to know. Do not deceive me now, but, tell me. *Is* he my father?"

"You know he is. What's the good of asking?" said Grizzle, in an impatient yet somewhat subdued tone; for there was that in the young girl's very calmness that awed her.

"Then it has come to this, at last! I knew this pleasant dream could not last forever!"

"But, you thought to keep it off as long as possible, said Mr. De Vere sarcastically. "A few falsehoods," more or less, made little difference to you."

"God forgive you, Mr. De Vere! From you, at least, I have not deserved this."

"No—you have deserved much consideration, much kindness, from me! Oh, false heart! that I should ever have believed you true!"

"You think me then a liar and an impostor?"

Something in her tone moved him; and he looked in the little, sorrowful face and beseeching eyes, with their pitiful look, so very sad to see in eyes so proud as hers. But, the memory of all Grizzle had told him, bearing so powerfully the impress of truth, came back to him; and nerving himself with remembered wrongs, he savagely answered;

"I do!"

Her clasped hands dropped.

"Once more—God forgive you, Mr. De Vere!"

"Pray for yourself," he said, haughtily. "You need forgiveness as much as me."

"May I go?" she said, wearily, dropping her head. "I am tired and sick! I never meant to wrong you;

and, if you would only believe that, I could forget the rest."

"I do *not* believe it, Jacquetta! I can never believe you more. You have deceived me too long and too often for that."

She leaned heavily against a chair.

"May I go? Will you not spare me? You are breaking my heart!"

"Let it break! You will be all the better for it, since it is so deceitful! No, you shall not go yet. You have not heard all. Your sins have found you out."

"Go on! I am listening!"

"Where is my son's child? Where is this child of yours, whose existence you have concealed so long?"

"Mr. De Vere!"

"Oh! start and look, and coin fresh lies! I know you of old, madam! Deny it, as you did your father! What an unnatural heart you must have, Jacquetta, to deny the existence of your own child, that I might leave all my wealth to you! Answer me: where is my son's child?"

"It is dead! It died the day of its birth!"

"It is false!" said Grizzle, sternly. "It lives!"

"You hear that!" said Mr. De Vere, triumphantly. "Your very confederates have turned against you! Add no more falsehoods to the rest. My grandchild lives!"

Again the bewildered look came over her.

"I am going crazy, I think! You told me he was dead," she said, turning to Grizzle.

"I never did. You paid me for taking care of it, and concealing its existence!"

Her eye turned involuntarily upon Orrie.

"Yes, *look!*" said Mr. De Vere, bitterly. "How well you know who it is! Does she not bear her father's face?"

"Is she my child?"

"Paugh! you sicken me with this acting! As if you needed to be told whose child she was! Speak—acknowledge the truth!"

"It is useless! You would not believe me."

"Speak, I command you! I have a right to know! Is she not your daughter?"

"She may be. I do not know. My heart always told me we were more than strangers."

"Oh! it did? I am glad your heart knew how to tell the truth for once, as it does not seem to be generally in the habit of doing so! So, Miss Jacquetta De Vere, of Fontelle Hall, has found a father in the outlawed Captain Nick Tempest, and a daughter in old Grizzle Howlet's *protégée*, all in the same day?"

She dropped her face in her hands with a low, bitter cry, that could not be repressed. Every one present sat mute, waiting for what was to come next. Mr. De Vere's brow did not relax; for, like all slow to anger, he was still slower to forgive. His lip curled scornfully as he looked on the little, drooping figure and bowed head, once so high and haughty.

"So you can feel shame? you can feel remorse? you can feel humiliation?"

"I am not ashamed!"

"I am sorry to hear it! But I forgot—those who stoop to deception, as you have done, seldom feel shame."

She raised her head and hands.

"Oh, my God!" she said, as the words of the dying cardinal came to her mind, "If I had loved thee as I have loved this man, Thou would'st not have cast me off thus!"

There was a pause, which no one seemed inclined to break. She arose to her feet, at last.

"Is there anything more? What else have I done?"

"Ah! you are anxious to be gone; but I have not quite done with you yet. Why did you never tell me what sort of a mother you had?"

"I did not think it necessary. It could have done no good."

"Oh, so you do not deny *that*? Well, I am glad you perceive the necessity of speaking the truth, at last! You did not think it necessary? No I dare say not! You took good care I should *not* know it!"

"Must I answer for my mother's sins?"

"Yes; the sins of the father shall be visited on the children, even to the third and fourth generations, saith the Lord."



"You can quote Scripture against me, too. Heaven and earth seems to have forsaken me alike! Ah, well! let it be! What else, Mr. De Vere?"

"The worst of all!" he said, in a low, passionate voice. "You have been unfaithful to your marriage-vow!"

Her white face turned crimson, and she started like one who had received a spear thrust through the heart. Turning for the first time towards Disbrowe, she gave him a look he never forgot.

"Oh, coward and traitor! Is this your revenge?"

"Ha! Then *he* knows, too?" cried Mr. De Vere, eagerly. "I did doubt that; but this confirms it! Then you *are* guilty?"

"What has he told you?" she cried, fiercely.

A flush of haughty anger and humiliation tinged the handsome face of Disbrowe, but he said nothing.

"It is false!" she cried, forgetting in her passion all respect for her questioner. "He must have told you. No one else knew—"

She checked herself, and again turned scarlet.

"Knew what?" said Mr. De Vere, with a piercing glance.

She made a frenzied gesture, like one goaded to desperation.

"I will not tell! Suspect what you like! You have laid this trap to ensnare me! I can fall no lower in your eyes than I have fallen now. Think me as guilty as you please, the whole of you! I am ruined and disgraced, and it matters little what becomes of me, now!"

"Then you do not deny it?" he said, significantly.

"I deny nothing! I acknowledge nothing! You think me lost, body and soul! Think so still, but let me go!"

"What, without your dear friend? Come hither, Sir Spaniard! Is it the custom in your country, when a wounded stranger is received into a man's house, to return his kindness as you have returned mine?"

"What has he done?" demanded Jacquetta, coming over and laying her hand, half-caressingly, half-protectingly, half-defiantly, on the boy's shoulder, and looking around like a stag at bay.

"Nay, Jacquetta, you would not have me answer that

question, I trust? But, Alfred, I must have an explanation from you! What do you know?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Nothing that you choose to tell, you mean. Alfred Disbrowe, I command you to tell! This—this—person is my son's wife, and I have a right to know!"

"I have nothing to tell, sir," said Disbrowe, so stunned by all he had heard, that he scarcely knew whether he was dreaming or waking.

"You have!" said Jacquetta, in a ringing voice. "Deny it not! Tell all you know!"

"You have accused me of doing that already!" he said, with a haughty bow.

"Then you have not told?"

He only replied by a look. He would not answer such a charge.

"Ah! and I have wronged you! I am sorry! will you forgive me?"

"I have nothing to forgive."

"No; it is scarcely worth while stooping to forgive so lost a wretch as I. Shall I tell you what he saw, Mr. De Vere, since he will not?"

"As you please. It matters little."

"Jacquetta!" said the boy in a trembling voice.

"Hush! fear not! Then through the door of this boy's room he saw me kiss him!"

"Ah!"

"How very indiscreet of you to leave the door open," said Grizzle with a laugh and a shrug.

Jacinto started up.

"Jacquetta, I will tell! I will!"

"Do, at your peril! Not one word, sir!"

"But—"

"Not a word! I will never forgive you if you do."

The boy hid his face in his hands with a groan.

"If you have anything to say, young sir, out with it!" said Mr. De Vere sternly.

Again Jacinto started up.

"Oh, Jacquetta, I must! It was my fault, and I will take the consequences. I will tell! I must tell! I cannot bear to think I was the cause of—"

"You are the cause of nothing. In my guilt and degradation I stand alone! From all blame you are free! You can say nothing that can free me from the crime of having such a father, such a mother, and such a child! I am the daughter of an outlaw and a villain, ruined and disgraced!—it has an ugly sound; but it is the truth, though I may never have spoken it before. Good-bye my friend; you, at least, believe me innocent of one crime with which I have been charged, and that is something. Mr. De Vere, what next? I do not wish to trouble you but as short a time as I can. I await your command to go."

"It will come presently. Jacquetta De Vere, I am sorry for you."

"There is no need, sir. What does it matter?"

"What will become of you when you leave here?"

"I am a small girl, sir; and in the Potter's Field there is room for another vagrant."

Some of the old love he had felt for her came back, as he saw that faint, cold smile.

"Oh! Jacquetta, why have you done this? Why were you so deceitful?"

"We will not speak of it, sir, if you please. I do not think I can quite bear it yet. Forget the past, and think of me as you have learned to to-day."

"Jacquetta, was it for his home and wealth you married my unfortunate son?"

"I'd rather not answer that question. You have already answered it to your own satisfaction; and nothing a confirmed liar, such as I am, can say, is to be believed."

"You were only a child then—a little child! was duplicity born with you, Jacquetta?"

"Very likely, sir. You forget my mother."

"Ah, true." His brow darkened again. "And so you will go with this man?"

"He is my father, sir."

"Oh! you acknowledge it at last—do you? you undutiful little minx!" growled the captain.

"Is the list of my crimes ended, Mr. De Vere? When may I go?"

"As soon as you please. I will ring and give orders to have your things packed up."

"No, sir, you will not! Bare and penniless as I came to Fontelle, I will leave it! Good-by, Mr. De Vere; you were a kind friend to me always, and I shall pray God to forgive you for the wrong you have done me this day. He is more merciful than man, and perhaps He may forgive even so lost a sinner as I am."

Her voice trembled a little as she moved one step away.

"One thing further. Since this is my child, may she not come with me? Neither she nor I will ever trouble you again."

"No!" said Mr. De Vere; "my grandchild stays in Fontelle Hall!"

"I cannot give her up so!" she said, passionately—she is all I have left to love! Orrie, I am your mother, will you not come with me?"

That pleading smile; that quivering lip—how pitiful they were to see!

"I am your grandfather, my child. If you will stay with me you shall live here and be a lady. You shall have everything your heart can desire."

Orrie looked from one to the other, and then up at Disbrowe, on whose knee she still sat. His face was averted, but he held her closer in his arm.

"Will he stay, too?" she asked.

"Yes," said Mr. De Vere.

"Then so will I!" said Orrie. "I won't go!"

Something faded out of the face of Jacquetta—it could not be color, for she was deadly white; it was as if a flickering light had gone out from a lamp. She put one trembling hand up before her face without a word.

"The last unkindest cut of all," quoted Captain Tempest, touched in spite of himself.

"Ring the bell, Frank, and tell Reynolds to serve dinner instantly," said Mr. De Vere, coldly.

Jacquetta lifted her white face, and made a step toward the door. Captain Tempest, Grizzle and Jacinto, rose too. No one else moved.

She reached the door; she paused on the threshold, her



face worked convulsively, and she turned back with a great cry.

"I cannot go like this! Will no one say good-by to me before I leave?"

"Certainly," said Mr. De Vere, "good-by. And in the future I hope you will learn to be true!"

"And that is all? And this is what I have loved so well? Oh! my heart! this is hardest of all! Augusta, Orrie, Disbrowe—silent all! And you, too, Frank," she said, in a voice of sorrowful reproach. "And I trusted to you."

There was a great sob from Frank, and the next moment he was over, holding her in his arms, and flashing defiance at all the rest.

"It's a shame! it's a blamed shame! it's a horrid shame! and I don't believe a word of it! They have no business to treat you so!" said Frank, with something like a howl of mingled grief and rage.

She smiled sadly.

"Then you do love me a little, yet, Frank?"

"Yes, I do! and I always will, too! I don't believe a single thing they said about you, and I never will believe it as long as I live—hanged if I do!"

There is something in a boy's grief—it is so honest and hearty, and outspoken, and comes so straight from the heart. It would have brought tears from Jacquetta's eyes if anything could; but she had none to shed—she felt like a stone, yet with such a dreadful pain at her heart.

"Good-by, my dear Frank, my brother! and do not quite forget Jacquetta!"

Frank was sobbing away in good earnest. Jacinto had his hand before his eyes, to hide the tears that fell hot and fast. Augusta lay perfectly still—for a deadly sickness had seized her, and she had fainted, though they knew it not. Disbrowe sat like a figure of marble, with his face hidden in his hand and the long locks of his falling hair. Mr. De Vere was cold and stern as a Spartan father condemning his only son to death.

"Farewell to all!" said Jacquetta, gently, "who loved me once! Farewell to old Fontelle!"

She turned away. The rest went after her. There was a few moments' death-like pause, and then they heard the hall-door heavily closed, and something in each heart crashed with it. They knew then that Jacquetta—bright, beautiful Jacquetta—the gay, sunny household-fairy, had left Fontelle forever!

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## CHAPTER XXI.

“HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP.”

“Lord Heron he dwells in his castle high,  
 Rosalind sleeps on the moor below,  
 He loved to live, and she loved to die;  
 Which loved the truest, the angels know.”

—BALLAD.

MR. DE VERE had made a gesture, as if casting something from him.

“It is gone—so is she, and peace go with her! Frank, is dinner ready?”

“I don’t know; and, what’s more, I don’t care!” howled Frank, wiping his eyes and nose furiously, in his grief.

“Francis!” exclaimed his uncle, in angry displeasure.

“I don’t, then—not one bit! You treated Jack shamefully, and I don’t care if you turn me out of doors for saying it. I’m blamed if I don’t go, anyway! I’ll run off and go to sea—I’ll enlist! You see if I don’t! You had no business to treat Jack so!” said Frank, with another howl.

“Francis!”

“Going and believing that old lying Grizzle Howlet, and ready to swear to everything she said, and snapping up Jack without giving her a chance to say a word for herself! I say it’s a shame! a blamed shame! And if I had known that was what you wanted of her, I shouldn’t have gone one foot; no, not if you were to hang, draw, and quarter me for it!”

“*Francis!*”

“I don’t believe she ever did one single thing that you said she did—only she was too proud to deny it, when she saw you believed that hateful, old, ugly Mother How-

let faster than her," vociferated Frank, ranting furiously up and down the room. "And that old scoundrel, Nick Tempest, too, going and saying she was his daughter—the old villain! I should like to know what everybody will say when they hear how you've treated her, and turned her out of doors. I should think you would be ashamed ever to show your face again, Uncle Rob!"

"Francis!"

"Oh, you may 'Francis' as much as you like; but I don't care! I will say just what I think, if you were a dozen uncles ten times over. I suppose people think boys ought to sit with their fingers in their mouths, and never say a word, just because they *are* boys, as if they could help that! I tell you, Uncle Rob, if I was you, I *would* be ashamed ever to show my face again! And you a justice of the peace, too! A pretty justice of the peace you are, aiding and abetting robbers and murderesses!"

"Leave the room, sir!"

"I'm going to, and the house too, if you like; and I will say again and again that it was a shame!"

"Will you be silent and leave the room?"

"I am a-going to; but I say again and again, it was a shame! It was a shame—there! It was a shame—there! It was a shame—now then!"

Mr. De Vere sprung up in a rage, collared the intrepid Frank and shook him till he was breathless.

"Now, will you say it?" he exclaimed between his teeth.

"It—wa-a-s a sh-a-a-me, there!" said Frank, between his chattering teeth.

Mr. De Vere seized the bell-cord, and rung a peal that brought up Reynolds.

"Here, Reynolds, take this fellow off, and lock him up in his room, and bring me the key."

Mr. Reynolds, who would have manifested no surprise, and would probably have obeyed without a word, if his master had told him to behead him, blandly seized Frank, and began dragging him off, while that young gentleman kicked and struggled manfully. But kicks and struggles were of no avail, Reynolds was getting the best of the battle.

"It was a shame—there!" yelled Frank, as Reynolds pulled him through the door.

Orrie, who saw something exquisitely ludicrous in the whole scene, gave vent to a shrill peal of laughter at the youth's discomfiture.

"Dinner is served, sir," said another servant, throwing open the door.

"Very well! Augusta, will you take my arm?" said her father, rising.

But Augusta spoke not—moved not.

"Augusta!" he said, in alarm.

There was no reply.

He went over, lifted her head, and saw the closed eyes, and corpse-like face.

"Good heavens! she has fainted!" he cried in consternation. And once more seizing the bell-rope, he pulled it, as if he would have torn it down.

Two or three servants answered the summons.

"Bring water, salts, hartshorn, something, anything, everything! Miss Augusta has fainted!"

They fled to obey. Restoratives were applied, and in a few moments the large, heavy eyes unclosed, and fell on the father's face.

"Are you better, my darling?" he said, bending over her.

Her eyes wandered around in a vague, wild way.

"Oh, papa, where is she?"

"Who, my love?"

"Jacquetta! Oh, papa! it was dreadful!"

"Leave the room!" said Mr. De Vere, sternly, to the curious servants, who reluctantly obeyed.

"Papa, what have you done to her?" she cried starting up.

"She is gone, Augusta! She will never come back more."

"Papa!"

"I regret the necessity as much as you can possibly do, Augusta; but justice must have its way. She has been weighed in the balance and found wanting."

"And you have turned her out of doors?"

He turned crimson.



"I could no longer keep her here with respect to myself, my daughter!"

"Poor little sister!" said Augusta, bitterly, "this is the return we have made her for all her love! Poor little Jacquetta!"

"She was guilty, Augusta!" said her father, sternly, "She carried a false heart under that fair face. Let us speak no more of her. Dinner is waiting."

"Excuse me, papa, I do not feel well, and would rather go to my room."

"Whatever you wish, my dear," he said, calmly. And she passed from the room without a word.

He turned to Disbrowe, but he had never moved. Orrie, too, lay very quiet, with her arms around his neck, and her head on his breast.

"Alfred," said Mr. De Vere, gently, for there was something chilling in this shrinking off of all.

The young man lifted his head, and raised his eyes, and his uncle started to see how pale, and cold, and stern he looked.

"I am sorry if this unpleasant scene has pained you, but it was unavoidable. Dinner is waiting—will you come down? You have tasted nothing since breakfast."

Captain Disbrowe gently placed Orrie on the ground, and arose.

"Of course you will not think of leaving us for a few days, now. It will be so lonely here that we can ill spare you."

"Thank you! I believe I shall carry out my original design, and leave to-day," he said, in a voice of chilling coldness.

"Leave to-day! My dear Alfred, you do not mean it!"

He bowed slightly.

"Will you have the goodness to deliver my luggage to whoever I may send for it, to-morrow?—and make my adieux to Miss De Vere and Frank!"

"Alfred!—my dear boy!—what do you mean?"

He was almost pitiful in his earnestness, and in the gathering sense of his loneliness, and he looked earnestly, wistfully, in his nephew's face. But that proud, full, handsome face was as cold and inflexible now, as his own

had been a few short moments before, when listening to another pleader.

"I am going, sir. I thank you for all your kindness to me since I came. Good-by."

"Alfred, you are angry?"

"No, sir—not that I am aware of."

"You are more—you are grieved, hurt, and deeply offended."

He only made a motion with his hand, and turned to leave the room.

"No; you shall not go!" said his uncle, firmly, "until you tell me what this means. Is it because she, Ja—"

"Excuse me, sir!—I do not care for hearing that name again."

"Is it because she is gone?"

"Not because she is gone," he said, coldly, "but because of the way she went."

"She was guilty!"

"She may be. You ought to know best, since you have known her longest."

"She has deceived me!"

"Well; so you told herself."

"And she did not deny it."

"Pardon me—I think she *did*!"

"Well; what matter?" said his uncle, impatiently; "she was guilty, none the less. So I could not act otherwise than I have done."

"I do not presume to criticize your conduct."

"Yet you are angry. Why is it?"

"I have been deceived—that's all," said Disbrowe quietly.

"Deceived?"

"Yes, sir!"

"How?"

"The person I was led to believe your daughter, my cousin, and a young lady, turns out to be a wife, a mother, and the daughter of one whom she herself justly called the greatest villain unhung!"

"Do you love her still?"

"Excuse me answering that question, and allow me to bid you, once more, farewell."

"You will go?"

A bow was his answer.

"I have acted for the best, and yet you all turn against me. I loved her myself; and yet, because I obeyed the command of justice, I am looked upon as a monster."

"Charity is as great a virtue as justice."

"Good-by, Alfred."

"Farewell, sir."

They shook hands, but how cold and quiet one hand was!

Disbrowe turned to quit the room, and his uncle sunk into a chair and buried his face in his hands. A child's shrill scream echoed through the house, and little Orrie was clinging to him, wildly.

"Oh, don't go!—stay with me!"

He stooped and put his arm around her.

"You must be quiet, Orrie, and let me go—I can't stay."

"Well, take me with you, then?"

"No, I cannot do that, either. You must stay here. If you cry, now, I shall not like you. Will you be quiet?"

"Yes," sobbed Orrie.

"Then, good-by! Now let me go."

He kissed her tenderly. "For her mother's sake," he said, gently; and then he let her go, and quitted the room.

He ordered his horse, and in a few moments was in the saddle, and galloping away, as if the arch-fiend himself was after him, toward the Mermaid Inn. He knew he would hardly reach it that night; but he would almost as soon have passed it in a wolf's den, as under the roof from which Jacquetta had been expelled.

How he thought and thought, as he rode along, until thought became agony, and he dashed over the ground like one mad to escape from himself. He felt sure that they had taken her to the lone inn, and he was glad that it would be dark long before he reached it, so he would not be obliged to look even on the house that held her. Not for worlds would he have looked on that fair, bright face again—not for ten thousand worlds would he have

touched that small, white hand it had once been such happiness to hold. He tried to shut out the "haunting shape, the image gay," that flashed before him in all its beauty, as if in deriding mockery, until his very brain reeled. He dashed and plunged furiously along through the deepening night, almost mad with impatience to reach the Mermaid. There was a possibility of his meeting Captain Nick Tempest there, and a diabolical determination filled his heart that one or the other should leave it a dead man. The Spanish boy, too—he felt as if it would be a direct mercy from heaven to twist his neck for him; and, in his present savage mood, he could have done it without remorse.

The daylight faded, and faded, behind the western hills, and the holy calm of a soft spring night settled over moor, and forest, and flowing river. Up rose the "young May moon," serene and silvery, smiling down like an angel-face on the young rider dashing along the lonely road at such a frenzied pace. There was something of heaven in the holy hush and drowsy calm of that bright, moonlit night, and something of its peace stole into the passion-tossed heart of the young Englishman. He looked up at the face of the serene sky, where the serene moon sailed, and reverently uncovered his head, awed by the deep, solemn beauty of the pale, bright night. The cool breeze lifted, lightly, the clustering locks of his dark hair, and calmed the feverish brow beneath, until his high heart-beating subsided, and he rode along in a subdued and decidedly more Christian mood.

The eastern sky was ablaze with the crimson and gold heralds of the coming morn, when the tired horse and rider halted at the door of the Mermaid Inn. Everything was profoundly still, the shutters closed and the door barred, and its master far in the land of dreams. But our impatient young Briton cared little what brilliant visions of princely custom Old Bob Rowlie was indulging in; and, with the butt end of his horsewhip, knocked furiously at the door in a way that might have awoken the dead.

Ten minutes elapsed—during which Disbrowe kept up a steady cannonade at the door, until there seemed some danger of his beating it down altogether; and then an



upper window was opened, a red woolen night-cap protruded, and a startled voice demanded who was there.

“A tired traveler. How long do you intend to keep me waiting here? Come down and open the door, you old villain!”

Thus civilly apostrophized, Mr. Rowlie drew in his head, shuffled down-stairs, and blinking very much, held the door open for his early customer to enter.

“Where is my horse to go? See that he is attended to directly; and let me have a bed as soon as possible. I feel completely used up.”

Old Bob led the way up-stairs to a small hole in the wall containing a bed and a chair, and informed Disbrowe it was his “best bedroom.”

“Oh, it will do well enough,” said the young man, casting a careless glance around. “See that my horse is well cared for and carefully rubbed down.”

“Yes sir,” said Mr. Rowlie.

“And look here, my friend, what do they call you?” said Disbrowe, divesting himself of his coat and boots.

“My name’s Rowlie, sir,” said the host of the Mermaid, in his slow and solemn way. “Mister—Robert—Ed’ard—Rowlie, gineral dealer in lickers and refreshment for man and beasts.

“Well, Mr. Robert Edward Rowlie, how many other guests have you at present in the house?”

Mr. Rowlie looked severely at the bed-post nearest him a moment, in deep thought, and then shook his head.

“We hain’t got any at this present: no—not any. It’s quiet here—remarkably so.”

“So I should say. But there was one—Captain Tempest—is he not here?”

Mr. Rowlie looked with increasing severity at the bed-post again, until he had sufficiently collected his faculties to reply.

“No, sir; he ain’t here—leastways, just at present; no—he ain’t.”

“Do you expect him soon?”

“Well,” said Mr. Rowlie, scratching his head, or more properly speaking, his night-cap, “there ain’t no saying about that. He might, and then again he mightn’t.”

"Well, what do you think?" said Disbrowe, impatiently. "Do you think he will come to-day?"

"Well, now, I really couldn't say," said Mr. Rowlie, with a look of helpless distress. "There ain't never putting any dependence onto him. He might, and then again—"

"He mightn't," interrupted Disbrowe. "Perfectly satisfactory! There, you may go now, my intelligent friend; but, should he come, will you just have the goodness to present him Captain Disbrowe's compliments, and let him know he hopes to have the pleasure of horsewhipping him within an inch of his life the first time they meet. There—go; I'm going to sleep."

To have seen the expression of Mr. Rowlie's expressive countenance on hearing this sanguinary announcement, with his mouth and eyes opened to their widest extent!

A faint smile broke over Disbrowe's face as he waved his hand for him to go; and the horrified host of the Mermaid took his departure accordingly.

Tired and worn out by his journey and the miserable night he had passed, it was high noon before Disbrowe awoke. There was no such thing as a bell in his room; so, hastily dressing and running his fingers through his hair, he glanced in a facetious little looking-glass, cracked across the middle, which ornamented the wall, and, possessing a strong natural taste for the ridiculous, reflected every feature askew. Having, by the aid of this dissolute mirror, twisted his shirt-collar hind side before, in the belief that he was thereby putting it on straight, he descended the stairs and passing into the bar, where he found Mr. Rowlie in the depths of a leathern arm-chair, solacing himself with his pipe and a mug of frothy home-brewed.

"Morning, squire!" was his sententious greeting, accompanied by a patronizing nod.

"Good-morning, Mr. Rowlie. Have you seen to my horse?"

"Yes," said Rowlie, meditatively—"yes; I have."

"Well, I will go and have a look at him myself; and meantime, send up some warm water to my room, and let me have breakfast."

Mr. Rowlie having promised obedience, Disbrowe sauntered out to see after Saladin; and having found that amiable quadruped pretty comfortable, returned to finish his toilet and take his breakfast; for being "crossed in love," as the housemaids call it, seldom interferes with a man's appetite. The meal being served in the kitchen, and being waited on by little Mrs. Rowlie, whom he found to be much more communicative and intelligent than her spouse, he proceeded to cross-examine her on matters and things—rightly concluding he stood a better chance of obtaining an answer from her than her solemn spouse.

"And so Captain Tempest left here yesterday morning," he was saying. "Did he tell you where he was going?"

"Oh, Lor! no, sir; he never tells nobody his business; but I expect it was something or other 'long old Grizzle Howlet. They're as thick as pickpockets, both of 'em."

"Have you any idea when he will return?"

"Well, now, I couldn't say exactly, but it ain't impossible he might come to-day or to-morrow, at furthest. His men are waiting for him out there in Rowlie's Cove."

"Where is that?"

"Just a small piece below; and it's always been called after us."

"There was a boy with him—a young Spaniard. Do you know anything of him?"

"Oh, that uncommon handsome little furriner! No; he hasn't been here for a long while now. I asked old Nick once where he was, and he told me he had gone to the—you know who; but I don't believe a word of it. He was a great deal too good-looking," said Mrs. Rowlie, laughing.

"Do you know if there is any chance of my getting a passage shortly in some craft going from here direct to New York?"

"Oh, bless you! yes, sir. Day after to-morrow Bill Briggs comes down in his wood-boat, and he would take you. You wouldn't mind going in a wood-boat—would you?" said Mrs. Rowlie, doubtfully.

"Oh, certainly not. It does not matter. Well, I suppose there's nothing for it but to wait. Is there any one here I could send to Fontelle for my luggage?"

"My nevvv will be here in the course of the day ; he could go."

"Very well ; send him then. By the way," he said carelessly, as if the thought had struck him for the first time, "can you tell me what this Captain Tempest trades in as he goes cruising around the world?"

Mrs. Rowlie glanced fearfully over her shoulder, as though she expected to see the burly form of the captain there in person, and answered, rapidly :

"I don't know, I'm sure : I hain't the least idee—not the least idee—not the least. He never brings nothing up here—leastways, nothing I ever see—so I really couldn't say."

"Do you know if he was ever married?"

"No, sir. Lor', how should I? It ain't more than three or four years since I seen him first, altogether, and he had no wife then that I ever heard on. He might be married a dozen times, though, for me."

"How came he and this old Grizzle Howlet to be so intimate?"

"Don't know ; 'cept that it is that birds of a feather flock together everywhere."

"And this child who lives with that old woman—little Orrie—do you know anything of her?"

"No, sir—not a thing. I've hearn she was the old woman's gran' darter, but I don't believe that, somehow. My 'pinion is, that that there old Grizzle ain't no better than she ought to be."

"You might swear that without fear of perjury, my worthy hostess. Have you anything here I can read to kill time this long day?"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Rowlie, departing with alacrity ; and presently reappearing with the whole library of the Mermaid, placed it on the table beside him.

There was the Pilgrim's Progress, Watts' Hymns, the Melodies of Mother Goose, and Robinson Crusoe, with the beginning and end torn out. Disbrowe smiled slightly at the attractive catalogue ; and lighting a cigar, leaned back and tried to beguile time alternately reading Watts' Hymns and Mother Goose.

That long day seemed endless in the dull Mermaid.



No one came the livelong day except the "nevvv" of Mrs. Rowlie, who was immediately packed off in a horse and gig to Fontelle for the young soldier's luggage. Half a dozen times Disbrowe started up in desperation, resolving to mount Saladin and ride to the old inn and see Jacquetta once more, in spite of them all, and as often checked himself, and paced up and down the little room like one insane. Night came, and brought with it a calmer mood ; but it was a night spent in feverish dreams. And he arose next day more restless and miserable than before.

Toward noon this feeling of restlessness grew unsupportable ; and, unable to remain inactive longer, he ordered out Saladin, sprung into the saddle, and dashed off in the direction where his heart had been since he left Fontelle. In less than half an hour, the old inn came in sight, looming up dark, and dismal, and forbidding in the solitary waste. No one was in sight, but a horse stood at the door, which he recognized immediately as the one he had often seen Frank ride. Could it be that Frank was there ? As he started forward to see, the door opened, and Frank himself rushed out, like one crazed, bare-headed and frantic, and was in the act of mounting and galloping off, when Disbrowe's voice arrested him :

"Hallo, Frank ! Good heavens ! what is the matter ?"

He might well ask ; for in turning round, Frank disclosed a face so wild and haggard, and eyes so full of passionate grief, that it sent a thrill of nameless terror to his heart.

"Oh, Frank ! speak and tell me what has happened ! Is *she* there ?"

"Who ?"

"Jacquetta."

"Yes," said Frank, in a tone of passionate bitterness, "she is there. Will you come in and see her ?"

"Yes ; come with me."

Both were on their feet in an instant and Disbrowe was white with apprehension.

"Come, then," said Frank, "and see the result of their work. You may all be proud of it alike."

"Frank ! Frank ! What do you mean ?"

"You will soon see. Come!"

He led the way into the long, high kitchen, and a strange, nameless horror was thrilling through the heart of Disbrowe.

Captain Nick Tempest sat gloomily scowling by himself, and neither moved nor spoke as they entered. Old Grizzle sat at the other end of the room, dark and sinister as usual, and glanced at them with a malignant smile as they came in, but did not speak. The door of a small room opening off the kitchen lay ajar, and passing into this, Frank made a sign for Disbrowe to follow. There was a bed in the room, and under a white sheet was the dreary outline of something that made Disbrowe reel as if struck by a blow.

Without a word, Frank pulled down the sheet, and pointing to what lay stark and white there, said, huskily:

"Look! there is Jacquetta!"

He looked. The small, delicate form was stiff and rigid—the bright, sparkling eyes were closed in their last sleep—the short, flashing curls lay in lifeless clusters on the pillow. The sweet, beautiful face would smile on him no more. Jacquetta lay there, and dead!

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE LONELY GRAVE.

"Thus lived—thus died she: never more on her  
Shall sorrow light, or shame."

YES, dead—stone-dead! beyond their power at last. More beautiful than she had ever been in life, she lay there before him; her tameless heart, that neither wrong nor sorrow could conquer, quiet enough now; the little restless hands folded gently over the marble breast—so strangely calm, so fair and beautiful in her dreamless sleep!

Moments passed while they stood gazing on her, and neither spoke. The face of Disbrowe worked convulsively; and at last, with a dreadful cry, he flung himself on his knees beside her.

"Oh, Jacquetta! Jacquetta! Jacquetta!"

"Too late!" said Frank, bitterly. "The world was not large enough for you and her. It is better as it is."

There was no response; but only that mighty cry:

"Oh, Jacquetta! Jacquetta! Jacquetta!"

It was the cry of a strong heart in strong agony—so full of such quick, living anguish and remorse, that it went to the heart of Frank. He looked down in the young face, once so careless and gay, but so full of mortal despair now, and it softened him as nothing else could have done. He laid his hand on his shoulder, and, dropping his face on it, burst into tears.

"They broke her heart," he sobbed. "She could never live disgraced!"

There was a step in the chamber; and the hand of Grizzle touched the young man.

"She left this for you," she said in a subdued tone, as if she, too, was a little softened by the sight of his despair. "She wrote it an hour before she died."

She handed him a small piece of paper, on which something was feebly scratched with a pencil. He opened it, and read:

"For all I have made you suffer, forgive me. Oh, Alfred! I loved you with all my heart and soul, and this is my atonement for my sin. May God forgive me! for I could not help it. When Jacquetta is dead, and you hear her reviled, try to think tenderly of her; for oh, Alfred! no one in this world will ever love you again as you have been loved by her."

That was all. He dropped his head, with a groan.

"Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk," said the deep voice of Grizzle; "yet it has been done now."

"Oh, my God! what have I said—what have I done?" he persistently cried. "This—this is what I have lost!"

Captain Tempest had entered the apartment, and, hearing that sad cry, came over, and with a sudden revulsion of feeling, so different from that of a moment before that it was almost like love, laid his hand kindly on the young man's shoulder:

"Lost through no fault of yours, Captain Disbrowe. I

am her father; and here, beside my dead child, who loved you, I will say what I never said before to mortal man, that I am sorry for what I done to you !”

He held out his hand; but Captain Disbrowe sternly motioned him back, and answered:

“Were you ten times her father it would make no difference. She abhorred you, and so do I! Never will my hand touch that of her murderer !”

“Hard words, young man,” said Captain Nick, his bronzed face slightly paling. “Every man has a right to his own; and she was my lawful child.”

“I will believe that when we can gather grapes of thorns! But, as I said before, were you ten times her father, I would not care; for, here in the presence of God and the dead, I declare you to be as much her murderer as if you had held the knife to her throat! Let her blood cry for vengeance upon you till the day of retribution comes !”

“Take care!” said Captain Nick, growing whiter still. “One word more, and we are deadly foes for life !”

“So be it. Captain Tempest, you are a coward and a liar !”

“Now, by heavens!” furiously began the captain; but the strong hand of Grizzle was laid on his shoulder, and she spoke rapidly and imperiously to him, in Spanish.

“Respect the dead!” said Disbrowe, pointing to the lifeless form, and speaking in the deep, stern tone he had used throughout. “I quarrel not with you here. Fear not but that a day of reckoning will come soon. Leave me now. I wish to be alone.”

Even had he not been under the influence of Grizzle, there was something in the eyes and voice of the young man that would have commanded his obedience. Like an angry lion, robbed of its prey, he turned, with a smothered growl, and, accompanied by Grizzle, left the room.

There was a long pause in the chamber of death. Like a tall, dark ghost, Disbrowe stood, his arms folded across his chest, his eyes fixed on the small, fair face in its calm sleep, his own face like marble. What seemed the world, his coronet and prospective bride, in that moment, compared with what he had lost!



Well has it been said that we know the value of nothing until we forever lose it.

How she arose before him in all her entrancing beauty—bright, radiant, untamed as he had known her first—this matchless girl who had loved him so well! He recalled her in all her willful moods; the fair sprite who teased and tormented him, yet whose bright smile could dispel his anger as a ray of sunshine dispels gloom.

He thought of her in her heroic daring, risking her own life, freely and fearlessly, for that of others—the tameless mountain fairy transformed to the ministering household angel, hovering beside the sick and suffering. How tame and insignificant all other women appeared beside her—this high-souled fay of the moonlight!

This was the girl who had loved him and them so well; and, in return, they had hurled back her love with scorn, and cast her off like a dog from their gates. And now she lay there before him, dead!

There was no reproach in those closed eyes—in those sweet, beautiful lips—on that fair, gentle face, or folded hands. She had forgiven them all for the great wrong they had done her; but, oh! he would have given worlds at that moment for words of pardon from those pale lips—those lips that never would speak more.

Frank's deep, suppressed sobs alone broke the silence of the room. Once or twice he had looked up to speak; but that white, stern face had awed him into silence, and he felt, with a strange thrill of terror and pity, that it was possible for that dark, tearless grief to be deeper than his own.

Disbrowe himself was the first to break the silence. And his voice sounded strangely cold and calm:

"Does he?"—Mr. De Vere he could not call him well then—"know of this?"

"No," said Frank, with a sob. "I was just going to Fontelle when I met you that time, and turned back."

"How did you know this—this had happened?"

"I didn't know. I thought it most likely I should find her here; and before daybreak this morning I started off, and I found—I found her"—A great sob finished the sentence.

"Dead!" said Disbrowe, drawing a long, hard breath. "When did she die?"

"Last night," said Frank, who was weeping as only a fresh-hearted boy can.

"And it all ends here!" said Disbrowe, looking steadily at the death-cold face. "Her short and sorrowful story! Oh, Jacquetta! why were you born for such a fate?"

There was an unspeakable depth of bitterness and despair in his tone. Frank checked his sobs, and looked at him fearfully.

"There was another—the young Spaniard—where is he?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him."

"Will you ask?—they will tell you," he said, pointing out.

Frank left the room, and, after a moment's absence, reappeared.

"Grizzle doesn't know, either, she says. He did not come with them after leaving Fontelle, but set off toward Green Creek by himself. Most likely he is there."

"Ah!" said Disbrowe, "then he is gone before this. Well, perhaps it is better so; and, after all, he was not so much to blame, perhaps—poor boy! Frank, you ought to go to Fontelle and let them know.

Frank started up.

"I will go directly; but you—where shall I find you when I come back?"

"Here, if I may stay. Ask the old woman to come here."

Frank left the room, and the next moment Grizzle sauntered in.

"You sent for me?" she asked in a careless tone.

"Yes. I want to know whether you have any objections to my remaining here, while she—she—" He stopped for a moment. "Until she is buried."

"No," said Grizzle, indifferently. "I have none. You may stay if you like. This is an inn, you know."

"I understand—you shall be paid. Has Frank gone?"

"Yes; I suppose so. I saw him gallop off."

"Very well. Will you leave me now? I wish to be alone."

In the same indifferent way the woman walked out, closing the door after her; and Disbrowe was alone with the dead! Dead!—how strange that word sounded in connection with Jacquetta! He could not realize that she was dead. So calm, and placid, and serene, was her look, that he almost expected to see her start up, as if from slumber, to inquire what he did there.

Captain Nick had resumed his former seat, and sat moodily scowling in the fire. As Grizzle reappeared, he looked up and asked, surlily:

“Well; what did he want?”

“What do you suppose he wanted?” replied Grizzle, in a tone quite as amiable as his own.

Captain Nick growled out a fierce oath between his teeth.

“Tell me, you old beldame! None of your cursed mysteries with me! What did he want?”

“Really, Captain Tempest,” said Grizzle, in a tone of provoking coolness, as she dropped on a stool before the fire, and with her elbows on her knees, and her chin between her hands, looked quietly in the blaze, “grief must have turned your brain a little when you attempt to bully me. However, allowance must be made for a father’s grief for the loss of an only child, and all that sort of thing, so I am happy to tell you he wanted nothing very sinister; but, considering what he knows, something pretty rash—in a word, to stay here all night.”

“Humph!—Alone?”

“Certainly! Frank has gone to Fontelle, I expect, and will not be back to-night; and who else is there to share his watch, unless our young Spanish friend comes—eh, Nick?”

“And that’s not very likely. My private impression is, that there is no particular love between Don Jacinto and the young and handsome guardsman.”

“Do you really think so?” And, as if struck by some ludicrous idea, Grizzle laughed outright.

“What are you grinning at, now, you old baboon?” demanded the captain, angrily.

“Nothing,” said Grizzle, smiling grimly at the fire. “Oh, nothing!”

"Then I wouldn't advise you to do it," said her gallant companion. "You are none too pretty the best of times, but you look like an old death's-head-and-crossbones when you laugh. And so he is going to stay here alone all night with you and I, Grizzle? Be hanged if he's not a brave fellow!"

"I fancy he would risk more than that for Captain Nick Tempest's daughter."

"I tell you what, Grizzle, he's a fine young fellow, and would make a splendid high-sea rover—he would, by the powers!" exclaimed the captain, enthusiastically.

"Bah! you forget the way he treated you a while ago!" said Grizzle, contemptuously.

"I don't care for that; there's a strong spice of the devil in him; and I'd give a bag of ducats for a dozen such hearts of oak among my crew."

"Really, now," said Grizzle, with a sneer, "what a pity so much valuable love should be lost! Perhaps you had better ask him to take a cruise in the *Fly-by-Night* to the coast of Africa. It would be a change for the future Earl of Earnecliffe and Baron of Guilford—eh, my bold buccaneer?"

"Tush! speak lower—confound you! Upon my word, Grizzle, I did not think he would venture to stay here alone to-night with you and I—I really didn't."

"Pooh! he knows there is no danger—that it would be as much as our lives are worth to touch him; and, besides, he is armed. Or, what is more likely still, he never thought anything about it at all. Lovers, you know, generally get into a state of mind when they lose their lady-love, and forget everything else."

"Do they? You ought to know, if any one does—eh, Grizzle?" said the captain, with a grin. "I wonder what his high and mightiness Duke De Vere will say when he finds his quondam daughter dead and gone? Do you suppose he will take on?"

"He will feel it, and most probably will suspect we helped her off."

"Now, by Jove! if he dares to breathe such an infernal suspicion, I will brain him where he stands!" exclaimed the captain, fiercely.



"You will do no such thing, my boasting friend. Will it not be a very natural suspicion, Captain Nick? Neither you nor I, you know, are thought too immaculate to be guilty of that or any other crime."

"Does he suppose I would slay my own daughter?"

"Of course he does—why should he not? What a blessed innocent you are, Nick!"

"You might do such a devil's deed, you old Mother Horrible! but I would not. No; bad as Nick Tempest is, he would not do that."

"You saintly cherub! Talk of Satan's turning saint after this. Are you not afraid of making your father Satan blush for his renegade child, if you talk like this? They ought to send you as a missionary to the Scalp-'em-and-eat-'em Indians. All you want is a bundle of tracts, and the Indians themselves will provide you with a costume, which, I believe, consists in a judicious mixture of red and yellow paint, some ornamental tattooing, and a bunch of feathers."

"Don't be a fool—will you?" said the captain, with a frown. "Stop your nonsense, and talk common sense. Where is she to be buried?"

"Mr. De Vere, most likely, will see to that."

"He'll do no such thing. I'll see to it myself."

"Pooh! what difference does it make? The girl's dead, and what odds who has the bother and expense of burying her? It's his duty to do it, too; for he had most of her while she was living."

Captain Nick looked at her in mingled anger and disgust.

"You miserable old anatomy! had you ever a woman's heart? No; I tell you, I shall bury her—I myself, as the spelling-book says; and Mr. Robert De Vere may mind his own affairs. He shall have nothing more to say to my girl, living or dead. To-morrow morning I'll be off to Green Creek for a coffin. I suppose I can get none nearer than Green Creek."

"No; unless you make it yourself."

"I had rather be excused. I could make a lady's bonnet as easily. Poor little thing! The other day, she was so full of life and spirits, and now we are talking of burying her."

There was a touch of something like melancholy in the captain's tone, that showed all his affection for his "little Lelia" had not entirely died out. Grizzle looked at him askance, shrugging her shoulders, and smiled to herself.

There was a pause, and then the captain began in a subdued tone:

"Grizzle, I wonder what made her die?"

"There's a sensible question! How do you suppose I know? She might die of fifty things—disease of the heart or congestion of the brain, or a paralytic stroke, or a want of breath, or—"

"A broken heart!"

Grizzle lifted her head, and laughed aloud.

"A broken heart! Ye saints and sinners! Captain Nick Tempest, the high-sea rover, talking of broken hearts! Upon my word, Nick, you are getting to be the most amusing person I ever knew—as good as a country justice or the clown of a circus. A broken heart!" And the lady laughed again.

The gentleman's answer was an oath—"not loud, but deep;" and a mysterious hint about making her laugh on the wrong side of her mouth, if she did not mind. And then the amiable pair sulkily relapsed into silence, and remained staring in the fire without a word, for the rest of the afternoon.

Night fell. Grizzle arose, heaped more wood on the fire, and set about preparing supper.

She had fallen into one of her sullen moods; and to the questions her companion now and then asked her, she either returned short and snappish answers, or did not reply at all.

When supper was ready, Captain Nick, without waiting to be invited—for which he probably might have waited long enough in vain—laid down his pipe, drew up his chair, and fell to with an appetite no way diminished by the loss of his daughter and heiress. Grizzle went over, and without ceremony opened the chamber-door where lay the dead girl, watched by her living lover.

He was sitting near the head of the bed, his arm resting on the pillow, his forehead dropped upon it, and his dark hair mingling with her bright, short curls, as still

and motionless as the corpse itself. The sight might have touched any other heart ; it would have the captain's, but on Grizzle it produced no effect. Men seldom grow so utterly depraved and lost to every good feeling as a hardened and reckless woman will. She went up to him, and touched him lightly on the shoulder.

He looked up, and his face was like marble.

"Supper is ready," she said. "Will you come out?"

"No: I do not want any."

"I will bring it in, if you like."

"No. Leave me."

"Shall I fetch you a light?"

"No," he said, with an imperious wave of his hand. "Go!"

His tone was not to be resisted. She left the room and the lovers—the dead and the living were again alone.

After supper, Captain Nick threw himself down before the fire, saying:

"Have breakfast ready bright and early to-morrow morning, Grizzle ; you know I must be off to Green Creek by day-dawn."

Grizzle nodded a brief assent, and in five minutes the captain was sound asleep. Then, having seen to the fire and put the room in order, she sought her own room to sleep the sleep of the guilty until morning and dream of the lonely watcher in the room of death.

Next morning, before the lark had begun to chant his matin carol, Captain Nick was in the saddle in a swift canter to Green Creek. Grizzle, curious to see the effects of his night's watching on Disbrowe, had softly opened the door once, and saw him in precisely the same attitude as that of last night—as though he had never stirred since.

"I knew he would feel it," said Grizzle to herself ; "but hardly as much as this, I thought. This *is* revenge ! I wonder where Master Jacinto is by this time ?"

The clatter of horses' hoofs at this moment brought her to the window, and she saw Mr. De Vere, Augusta, and their family physician in the act of dismounting.

"I knew it," she said, with one of her hard, grim smiles. "They suspect foul play, and have brought the doctor to make sure. Well, they're wrong for once—

that's one comfort! Oh, you had better beat down the door—hadn't you? One would think you were master here, as well as in Fontelle Hall."

Thus apostrophizing, the lady leisurely shuffled to the door; and, opening it, saw Mr. De Vere very pale, and dark, and stern, standing on the threshold. The moment his eye fell on Grizzle, he grasped her fiercely by the wrist, and said, in a hoarse whisper:

"Woman—fiend! have you murdered her?"

"You have brought a doctor—go and see!" said Grizzle, with a sneer.

"If you have, by all the hosts of Heaven, you and your vindictive companion shall hang as high as Haman, in spite of earth and all it contains!"

"You threatened before, Mr. De Vere, and your threats ended in smoke, if you remember."

"You will find to your cost, they will not this time. Where is Jacquetta?"

"Not far distant. Ah! you here, too, Miss Augusta? Your first visit, if I remember right. Really, my poor dwelling is honored this morning."

"Here, get along—get along—get along!" interrupted the doctor, impatiently. "We have no time to stand fooling here, old lady. Lead the way—will you? Take my arm, Miss Augusta."

Augusta, worn to a shadow, haggard, and deathlike, and looking more like a galvanized corpse than a living being, took the little doctor's proffered arm, and followed her father and Grizzle into the house. They entered the chamber, and their eyes fell on the bowed and motionless form of Disbrowe, resting beside the dead.

"Poor boy!" said Mr. De Vere, bitterly. "It is a sad blow for him!"

"Oh, Jacquetta! Oh, my sister!" exclaimed Augusta, with a great cry, as she sunk on her knees beside the bed. "Dead! dead! dead! alone and friendless—deserted by all!"

Her cry aroused Disbrowe. He looked up; and seeing them, arose.

"My poor boy! my dear Alfred!" exclaimed his uncle, in a choking voice.



"Look at her, sir," said Disbrowe, sternly, pointing to the lifeless form. "Is Justice satisfied at last? What do you think of your handiwork?"

"I am sorry—I am sorry. Oh, Alfred, the heart knoweth its own bitterness."

"I am aware of that, sir. She knew it, too, in her dying hour. Who is to answer for this death?"

"God forgive me if I have wronged her! I meant to act for the best. Have you been here all night?"

"Yes," he said, coldly and briefly.

"Still unforgiving," said Mr. De Vere, turning sadly away; "and I thought I was doing right. Poor child! how serene she looks! A dead saint might look like this. Poor little Jacquetta! Poor little Jacquetta!" he said, putting his hand before his eyes to hide the tears that fell hot and fast.

Disbrowe stood like a tall, dark statue, with folded arms, gazing out of the window. Augusta wept convulsively, and even the little doctor's eyes were full of tears.

"Poor little thing! she *does* look like a dead saint, and she deserves to go to heaven, if ever anybody did; for there never was a better girl. Ah! she has the prayers of the poor and the weak, anyway, let the rich and the great turn against her as they might. I don't think there has been any foul play here. She has died a natural death, evidently; of a broken heart, most likely, poor child! You leave the room—will you?" said the little doctor, wiping his eyes, and blowing his nose furiously, and turning ferociously round on Grizzle.

That lady gave him a glance of supreme contempt, and obeyed.

For nearly two hours, the party remained shut up in the room, and then Mr. De Vere came out and addressed Grizzle.

"Where is Captain Tempest?" he coldly asked.

"Gone to Green Creek for a coffin."

"He may spare himself the trouble. My carriage will be here, presently, with one. I intend to bury her myself."

"Just as you like. It makes no difference to me."

"You can tell Captain Tempest that she shall be buried

in the family vault, as if she were really my daughter, and it will prevent the talk and scandal that must necessarily ensue if she were taken to Green Creek Cemetery. It is a better arrangement for all parties."

"You can do what you like with her. A dead body is of no great importance to any one."

Mr. De Vere turned away with a look of disgust; but he paused suddenly, as the sound of carriage-wheels met his ear.

The next moment, the boisterous voice of Frank was heard, shouting for admittance; and he and William, the coachman, presently appeared, bearing between them that most dismal of all objects—a coffin.

Disbrowe's marble face grew a shade whiter as it fell on the ghastly object. The lid was taken off, and the doctor and Mr. De Vere reverently raised the slight, girlish form and placed it in its last resting-place. And then all gathered around to take a last look at the fair face they were never to see again.

How sweet, how placid she looked, like an infant asleep, with her little white hands serenely folded over her still heart, a faint, half-smile still lingering around the death-cold lips!

The loud sobs of Frank and the passionate weeping of Augusta resounded through the room. Mr. De Vere, too, shaded his face to hide his fast-falling tears; and the doctor was using his handkerchief incessantly. Disbrowe alone shed no tear, heaved no sigh, but stood like a dark ghost, voiceless and tearless.

And now they were bending down for one last kiss; and Disbrowe, too, stooped and touched the dead lips he never had touched when living. And then the coffin-lid shut out the sweet, dead face, and small, graceful form; and it was screwed down; and the screws seemed driving into their own hearts. And then the sable pall was thrown over it, and Mr. De Vere and the doctor raised it and carried it out to the carriage.

They all followed. Grizzle stood by the window, watching them without a word. Augusta entered first, then Mr. De Vere and the doctor, while Frank and Disbrowe mounted their horses and rode behind.

On they drove, faster than ever a funeral ever went before; and in less than four hours the stately home of the De Veres was in sight. That home she had so often gladdened by her bright presence she was now borne to—dead.

The vaults were entered by the north wing—that mysterious north wing. The way went down a long flight of broad stone stairs, and the air smelt of death and the grave, damp and earthy.

No one had ever rested there yet, and the lonely coffin stood there by itself. The doctor read the burial service. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." What a cold chill the mournful words, sublime in their truth, struck to every heart!

It was over at last, and they all turned away. As the great iron key turned in the rusty lock of the door of the vault, the whole dreadful reality broke upon Disbrowe for the first time. He had been like one in a dream, hitherto—he could not realize it; but now those cold stone walls, that massive door, was between them. He was going out into the great world again, and Jacquetta lay dead and buried within.

With a dreadful groan, he leaned against the wall and covered his face with his hands. What was there left for him in the world worth living for now?

"My dear boy—my dear boy!" said Mr. De Vere, in a choking voice.

The words aroused him, and he remembered he was not alone. He started up to go.

"Oh, Alfred we must not part like this. Shall we not be friends before you go? I am an old man, Alfred, and I love you for my sister's sake."

It was an appeal there was no resisting. Disbrowe stretched out his hand, and caught that of his uncle's in a friendly clasp.

"Good-by, my dear uncle. Let the presence of the dead consecrate our new friendship. Augusta, my cousin, farewell. Frank—doctor—good-by."

He waved his hand, and sprung on Saladin.

"Then you will go? Oh, Alfred, if you would but stay with us a few days longer."

"I cannot. Farewell."

He was gone. Down the maple avenue he rode, and disappeared among the trees. As he reached the gate, he paused to look back—his last look, he thought it. How little did he think with what different feelings he would gaze on it in days to come!

Who can tell what to-morrow may bring forth?

He rode on; Fontelle disappeared, was left behind, and with it was left Jacquetta in her lonely grave.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### OVER THE SEA.

"And now I'm in the world alone,  
Upon the wide, wide sea;  
And why should I for others groan  
When none will sigh for me?"

—CHILDE HAROLD.

ONE week later, and the bark "Sea Gull" left New York harbor, bound for "England's Isle." The passengers stood watching the fast receding shores of "Uncle Sam," and standing off among them was the tall, gallant form of Captain Alfred Disbrowe, gazing thoughtfully, sadly, on the land he was leaving.

Down the river, on to the wide ocean, swept the stately ship, and slowly and gradually the shores began to recede.

"Adieu to the new land!" he said, waving his hand; "farewell to bright America."

"A long farewell," sighed a familiar voice behind him, and turning suddenly round, he stood face to face with Jacinto!

There was a pause, during which Disbrowe's eyes were fixed steadily on his face. The boy's dark eyes fell, and the blood mounted to his brow.

"You here!" said Disbrowe, slowly; "this is a most unexpected pleasure."

"I did not know you were on board," said Jacinto, timidly. "I—I thought you were going to remain in New York,"



"And I expected you would have returned with your friend, Captain Tempest," said Disbrowe, coldly.

"He is no friend of mine," said the boy, quickly. "I never knew him until I met him accidentally in Liverpool, and finding he was to sail the next day, took passage in his ship. That is all."

"Have you not seen him since you left Fontelle?" said Disbrowe, suspiciously.

"No," said the boy, earnestly; "not once."

"You have heard what has happened since?"

Jacinto lifted his large, black eyes, and Disbrowe saw they were full of tears.

"Yes, and indeed I was very—very sorry."

"I have no doubt of it."

His tone of proud, bitter endurance went to the heart of Jacinto, and the tears fell fast from his eyes.

"Oh, Captain Disbrowe, I am sorry for you. Indeed—indeed I am sorry for you."

"Keep your pity, my young friend, until I ask for it," said Disbrowe, with a look half-disdainful, half-cynical, "and dry your tears. I really don't require them."

"Oh, Captain Disbrowe, what have I done to you? I never—never meant to offend you; and I am so sorry if I have done so. Oh! if you only would believe me, and not treat me so coldly," said the boy, clasping his hands fervently.

Disbrowe glanced at him slightly, for a moment, and then looked out over the wide sea.

"My good youth, how would you have me treat you?—clasp you in my arms, and salute you on both cheeks *à la Française*? Not any, thank you!" he said, coolly.

The boy looked down, and his lips quivered slightly.

"I never meant to offend you—I never did! You hate me, and I—I would die for you!"

He turned to go. Disbrowe thought of the time he had saved his life at the risk of his own, and a pang of self-reproach smote his heart. He started up, and laying his hand on the lad's shoulder, said, kindly:

"Forgive me, I did not mean to hurt your feelings; but the truth is, I am moody, and out of sorts, and just in the humor to quarrel with the whole world. Come,

Jacinto, after all that is past and gone, we will yet be friends."

He held out his hand, with a slight smile. The young Spaniard caught it in both his and raised it to his lips, while his dark cheeks were hot and crimson with some secret feeling.

"And so you really like me, my dear boy?" said Disbrowe, half-puzzled and half-touched, and thinking involuntarily of little Orrie.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the boy, lifting his sparkling eyes fervently to the handsome face of the young Guardsman.

"Yet, I do not know why you should—I have never done anything as I am aware of to merit any affection from you."

"That would be loving from gratitude, señor. Do we never love any save those who have done something to merit that love?"

"Well, I don't know—if you were a woman I might understand it, but as it is—well, never mind, I am glad you do like me, and we will not puzzle ourselves trying to discover the reason. 'Never look a gift-horse in the mouth,' you know. We will account for it on the principle that scapegraces, and those who least deserve it, are always best beloved, and so *sic vita!*"

"Love is an impulse, and despises common sense. The young god is always painted blind."

"Which accounts for the desperate mistakes he makes sometimes. But, my lad, there is a subject painful to both of us, but on which I must speak, now or never! I mean the scene I saw that evening going to the library. You know to what I allude?"

His face flushed slightly, as he spoke, and as quickly grew pale again.

"Yes," said Jacinto, looking straight before him; "and I have often and often since wished to explain what I saw you misunderstood."

"Well, speak out freely, do not fear that I will flinch from the stroke."

"There is no stroke to fall. We loved each other like brother and sister—nothing more."

"Nothing more! Are you sure?" said Disbrowe, turning, and looking searchingly in his face.

"No, nothing more," said Jacinto, lifting his dark, reproachful eyes. "Oh, Captain Disbrowe, how could you think so?"

"Such things have occurred before."

"And you really thought for a moment that she could love a boy like me, in the way you mean?"

"I thought so for a good many moments, my dear fellow. I wronged her—I wronged you both; and I am sorry for it now, when it is too late."

"Not too late, señor. I am certain she hears and forgives you."

"And you, my boy?"

"I have nothing to forgive."

"Thank you! was she angry with me that day when I left?"

"No, only grieved and hurt. Your words went to her heart, because—"

"Well?"

"Because she loved you, Captain Disbrowe."

Both paused, and the fine face of Disbrowe was dark with sorrow and remorse.

"And I never knew it till it was too late. Oh, Jacinto, why does every good gift come too late in this world?"

There was a dark, passionate dejection in his tone that startled the boy. He softly laid his hand on that of the young man, as if to recall him back to himself.

"I wish to heaven I had never set foot in America, Jacinto; I wish I had been dead and in my grave before I ever thought of coming here. She might still be alive, and I—"

He paused, and a hot, bright tear fell on his hand. He glanced first at it, and then at the boy, with a strange look.

"What, for me! don't shed tears for me, my boy. I am not worth them, and never will be, now. Oh, Jacinto! the world is as empty as a nutshell."

Again that sad, reproachful look in those dark, raised eyes.

"And is there no one in all this wide world who loves

you still ? Oh, Captain Disbrowe ! are *all* dead with Jacquetta ? ”

The young man made an impatient gesture.

“ Of what use is love, when we cannot love in return ? I never loved but her, and now she is gone forever ! Sadly true are the words of the Wise Man, ‘ All is vanity and vexation of spirit ! ’ You are not ill—are you, Jacinto ? ”

“ Oh, no ! ”

He was leaning over the side, his dark eyes fixed on the far-off horizon ; and something had went out of his face at Disbrowe’s words, like a light from a vase.

“ Did she tell you she loved me, Jacinto ? ” he asked, after a pause.

“ There was no need—I saw it.”

“ It was more than I ever saw then—blind idiot that I was ! ”

“ Lookers on, they say, see most of the game. And she would not let you see it, because she was high and proud ; and she knew you—she thought you were bound to another.”

“ Ah ! and that was the reason, that—

‘ Memory of a lady  
In a land beyond the sea.’

And because I was bound to one, I lost the other ! As if one smile from Jacquetta were not worth a thousand Normas.”

He spoke more to himself than to his companion ; and he did not observe that the hand that lay in his had grown deadly cold, and was hastily withdrawn.

“ Did she ever tell you she was married ? ” he asked, after another pause.

“ No.”

“ Did she ever account for the strange nightly music ? ”

“ No.”

“ And you never asked her ? ”

“ No.”

Disbrowe looked at him, a little surprised at his laconic answers.

“ You are ill, my boy ! You are deadly pale—sea-sick, perhaps ? ”



A faint smile at the unromantic hint broke over the boy's face for a moment, and then as quickly died away.

"No, I am not sea-sick—I never am—it is nothing. Is she—is she—buried?"

"Yes!" said Disbrowe, shading his face for an instant, as the memory of that lonely grave in the cold, dark vault rose before him.

"Poor Jacquetta!" said the boy, softly, his eyes again filling with tears.

"Do not speak of it more, Jacinto; it is like vinegar upon niter to me. Now for yourself. May I ask what is your destination?"

"I am going direct to London."

"Ah! then we will be fellow-travelers—that is my destination, too. Have you friends in London?"

"Yes; I think so."

"Your birthplace is Seville, I think I heard them say?"

The boy bowed, with averted face.

"You must be my guest in London, my dear fellow. I will show you all the sights worth seeing, from the Tower to the Thames. Come, what do you say?"

"That I thank you very much; but my business is pressing. I can only remain in your great modern Babylon two or three days; so, you see, much as I should like to accept your kind offer, I must yet decline."

"Well, I am sorry; but, as it cannot be helped, I suppose we must be resigned. Two or three days is but a short time to see the wonders of London. I should like to have taken you to old Fontelle and Disbrowe Park—two country seats of ours—and shown you what the 'homes of Merrie England' are like. Lord Earnecliffe would have liked you immensely, and so would her ladyship."

"You are too kind. Indeed, I wish I could accept your invitation; but at present it is quite impossible. Some day I hope to be more fortunate."

"You will always be welcome, my boy—don't forget that. And I will not forget that you once saved my life at the risk of your own. If I seemed to do so for a time, it was when I unjustly accused you; and I believe grief, and anger, and jealousy, made me half a maniac. All

that is past now, and we will let 'bygones be bygones.' Shall we not, Jacinto?"

"With all my heart. You make me very happy by saying so."

"Then that is settled. And there goes the last glimpse of the bright land we are leaving. I wonder if we will ever see it again, Jacinto!"

"Heaven knows! I hope to do so."

"I hardly think I ever will; and yet I like America, and those American people. But sunny Spain and merry England are dearer still; and so we can heave a sigh for the land of Columbus, and in the same breath, chant the old prayer: 'God bless our own land, that lies beyond the sea, for it is like no other.' Say amen to that, Jacinto."

"Amen, from the bottom of my heart. It is home, and doubly dear after the land of the stranger."

"Yes; see the shores fade away in the horizon; and now we are on the 'wide, wide sea.' Once more a long, a last farewell to America."

And with a smile he turned away, and descended to the cabin.

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One dark, unpleasant evening, two months later, just as night was falling over London, a hackney-carriage drew up before a large hotel, and two travelers sprung from it. Both were wrapped in cloaks; for, though the month was August, the evening was raw and chilly, and they wore their hats pulled down over their brows. One was slight and boyish, the other tall and dashing, with a certain soldier-like air and bearing.

"And so we part here, Jacinto?" said the elder of the two.

"Yes, Captain Disbrowe; to meet again some day, I hope."

"I hope so. Don't forget you are to come to see me if ever you return to England."

"Thank you, I will not forget. Good-by, Captain Disbrowe."

"Good-by, my dear boy; and as the Scotch say, 'God be wi' ye.'"

They shook hands cordially, and then the younger turned into the hotel, and Captain Disbrowe, wrapping his cloak close around him, hurried rapidly down the street. Two "guardians of the night" were leaning against a lamp-post, talking, and the young man struck violently against one of them in his haste.

"Beg pardon," he said, turning round for a moment, and the next he was gone.

The watchman rubbed his shoulder, and looked after him with a smothered growl.

"A lord, that," said his companion, looking after him also. "I know him like a book."

"Well, if he is a lord, that is no reason why he should bring up against a fellow as if he was made of cast-iron. Blessed if I ain't a good mind to give him in charge for 'sault and battery. What's his name?"

"Lord Earnecliffe, as used to be Captain Disbrowe of the Guards. An uncommon wild cove he was—used to get into no end of scrapes with the rest of the young bloods, and was known to the perlice like a bad penny. He's been abroad in furrin parts somewhere; and he's Lord Earnecliffe now since his brother died."

"What's that you say?" said a fashionable-looking young man who was passing, as he stopped suddenly. "What's that about Lord Earnecliffe? Have you seen him?"

The policeman started up and touched his hat.

"Yes, my lord, just gone past—the new earl, I mean."

"Yes, I know; thank you," said the gentleman, as he walked rapidly away.

"Another of 'em," said the watchman, leaning back. "That's Lord Austrey; he and the other were always very thick."

The gentleman called Lord Austrey hurried rapidly along, and came up with Disbrowe near the end of the street. Laying his hand on his shoulder, he exclaimed:

"Alfred, my boy! is this really yourself, or your ghost? Turn round until I see! No; it is you in *propria persona*. Welcome back to England!"

"Austrey, my dear, old fellow!" exclaimed Disbrowe,

delightedly, "who in the world would ever expect to see you here?"

"When did you arrive?"

"I reached London an hour ago only. How came you to know me?"

"I heard a couple of Charlies up there saying that Lord Earnecliffe had gone past, and so I hurried after."

"My brother here! Where is he?"

"Your brother? My dear fellow! is it possible you don't know?"

"Know what? I don't understand."

"My dear Alfred, your brother is dead!"

"Dead! good heavens!"

"Yes—he died three weeks ago at Disbrowe Park, of disease of the heart. I wonder you did not see it in the papers."

"I have not looked at a paper for the last two months. Dead! Oh, Earnecliffe! and I not there!"

He covered his eyes with his hands, half-stunned by the suddenness of the shock. Lord Austrey hailed a carriage and drew him into it, gave the driver some directions, and they clattered rapidly away over the stony street.

Disbrowe's brain was in a whirl; and so completely overcome was he by the news, that he could not ask a single question. The cab stopped; they got out; and it was not until he found himself in his friend's room that he could speak.

"And Lady Margaret—where is she?"

"At Disbrowe Park still—waiting for you, I believe. It is most astonishing you have not heard of it."

"I never heard a word of it. Have you seen Lady Margaret since?"

"Yes; she sent to know if I had heard from you. She is extremely anxious for your return."

"How does she bear it?"

"Well, calmly enough. You know, it was to be expected, my dear fellow. He was liable to die at any moment these many years. He had just been taking a short walk, and sat down on a seat to rest, and—never rose."

"My poor brother! Oh, Austrey! he was such a kind



brother to me—so indulgent to all my faults, and their name was legion. Who is with Lady Margaret?”

“No one I believe, except Mr. Macdonald. He happened to be at the Hall at the time, and told me he intended remaining until your return. It would not do to leave Lady Earnecliffe quite alone, you know.

A slight red came into Disbrowe’s pale cheek.

“And his daughter—is she there, too?”

“No; Miss Macdonald is abroad—has been for some time—but is expected to return, shortly.”

“Indeed! Where is she?”

“Can’t say, positively. Somewhere among the wilds of Scotland, I think. Of course your marriage must be postponed now?”

“Of course,” said Disbrowe, with a promptitude that rather surprised his friend. “There can be no two ways about that. To-morrow morning I will start for Disbrowe Park.”

“Do so, by all means. Lady Margaret intends spending the winter in Italy, I believe, and cannot leave home until she sees you. I will go down with you, if you choose.”

“My dear George! the very thing. I would have asked you to do so, only I feared it would be too much, even for your good nature, to bury yourself alive at Disbrowe Park. How are all my friends in London?”

“All quite well, I think—some have gone abroad, and some got married. *A propos* of nothing—how did you like your visit to America?”

“Well enough.”

“What is the place like?”

“A fine country—you should see it.”

“I don’t know. I never care for wandering beyond the precincts of the Serpentine; the world beyond that is only half-civilized. Do you like the Yankees?”

“Very much—never saw people I liked better.”

“Particularly clever and wide-awake, I have heard—the men all smart, and the women all handsome. Well, I don’t know but I shall take a trip over there, some day, just to see for myself. It’s such an old story doing the Grand Tour, as they call it—like the journey nurses give chil-

dren to Banbury Cross, it's slightly monotonous. But you look terribly used-up, my dear fellow ; had you not better retire ? ”

Disbrowe, or, more properly, Lord Earnecliffe—but the former name is too familiar for you and I to give up, dearest reader—arose, and Lord Austrey rung the bell. A servant appeared, and showed him into an elegantly-furnished apartment, where the greater part of the night was spent, not in sleeping, but in pacing up and down his room, lost in his own thoughts.

After an early breakfast, next morning, the two young peers were in their saddles and ready for their journey.

“And now for Disbrowe Park !” exclaimed Lord Austrey, as they dashed off together at a rapid pace.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

NORMA.

“It was not thus in other days we met ;  
Hath time and absence taught thee to forget ?”

NEVER fell the sunlight on a fairer English homestead than the one on which streamed the warm, golden sunshine on the bright September morning of which I write. A large, irregular old building, not unlike a modernized castle, or a French château that had taken a serious turn, peeped through the clumps of trees, and thick, clustering, dark-green ivy. There were great windows of stained glass, and projecting gables, and odd rookeries, and an old Gothic chapel at one end—very pretty and romantic-looking indeed. There were broad, sunny glades, with deer frisking about, and long laurel walks, and shady avenues ; even the trees met, and intertwined their long, green arms overhead—delightful walks and mighty suggestive for lovers. There were a couple of fountains, too—three twisted serpents on one side, spouting forth tall jets of water, and bronze lions on the other, with gold and silver fish sporting in the glittering waters. There were the sunniest of smooth meadows, the most velvety of lawns, the brightest of terraces, overrun with ivy, roses, jasmine, and honeysuckles. There was the most fragrant and bril-

liant of pastures, bright with flowers of every hue and size, from the wee, modest English violet, to the gaudy, flaunting tulip, passion flowers, and tall, creamy magnolias. There was a mimic lake, lying like a great white pearl in a setting of emeralds, where snowy water-lilies floated, and on whose silvery bosom majestic swans, of dazzling whiteness, serenely swam. Altogether, it was like a little glimpse of fairy-land, a peep into Arcadia; yet, had you asked the gate-keeper in his pretty little lodge beside the great gate, he would have told you it was only Disbrowe Park.

The young lord of the manor, in a rich Turkish dressing-gown, and black velvet smoking-cap, with a gold tassel, lay on the low sofa, at full length, looking very handsome and very lazy. Being left to his own devices—Lady Margaret having gone abroad—he was alternately regaling himself with smoking a meerschaum, reading the morning's letters, yawning, and looking out of the window. None of the epistles seemed to have the power of fixing his attention; for, after glancing lightly over them, he crumpled them up, and threw them into a *chiffonnière*—which had, no doubt, been placed there for that purpose—blew a few whiffs of his meerschaum, caressed an exquisitely beautiful little grayhound that lay on the carpet beside him, and leisurely went on with the next, which shared the same fate. At last he lighted upon one that aroused his wandering thoughts; for he started as he read it, and a look of angry annoyance and chagrin passed over his face. As he finished, he uttered an impatient ejaculation, and, springing to his feet, began pacing rapidly up and down the room, after his custom, when angry and excited.

A tap at the door disturbed his irritated soliloquy. "Come in," he called; and Mr. Norton, his *valet de chambre*, "confidential," etc., made his appearance.

"Lord Austrey, my lord, has—"

"There! Lord Austrey can announce himself," said that individual, springing up the stairs, two or three steps at a time. "That will do, my friend; make yourself thin as air as soon as possible."

Mr. Norton bowed, and went off; and Lord Austrey flung himself on a lounge opposite Disbrowe.

"Now, then! I don't see why taking things easy shouldn't pay in my case as well as in other people's. Earnecliffe, my dear fellow, what's up? You look as if you had lost your best friend."

"What's up? Read that!" said Disbrowe, angrily, throwing him the crumpled letter. "No need to ask."

Lord Austrey leisurely smoothed it out, and glanced at the superscription.

"*To the Right Honorable, the Earl of Earnecliffe.*"

"Humph! that's all right enough. Now for the inside :

"*MY DEAR ALFRED :—*You will be pleased to hear that Norma arrived in town two days ago, and is at present visiting her cousin, Mrs. Tremain, at her residence, in Berkely Square, where, no doubt, she will be delighted to see you at the earliest possible moment.

'Yours truly,

'RANDALL MACDONALD.'

"That's all. It's on the short, sharp and decisive principle. And now, my dear Earnecliffe, let me congratulate you!"

"Congratulate me!" said Disbrowe, looking at him. "For what, pray?"

"There's a question!" exclaimed Lord Austrey, appealing to society at large. "The man asks what he's to be congratulated for, when his lady-love, who has been away for—how long is it, Earnecliffe?—comes suddenly back, and 'will be delighted to see you at the earliest possible moment,—in fact, hangs like a ripe plum, ready to drop into your mouth at any instant."

"I do not believe in ripe plums ready to drop into one's mouth!" said Disbrowe, dryly. "I had rather have the trouble of climbing, and plucking one for myself."

"Unreasonable mortal! you might get a severe scratching in the attempt."

"I would risk it. The greater the trial, the greater the triumph, you know. The consciousness of gaining a victory would more than repay me for the trouble."

"You remind me of the old adage:

'Fly love, and love will follow thee;  
'Follow love, and love will flee.'



Now where, oh most fastidious youth, can you find one more beautiful, more accomplished, more wealthy, more fitted in every way to become Countess of Earnecliffe, than this same Miss Norma Macdonald?"

"Nowhere, perhaps. But, supposing I am not inclined for having a Countess of Earnecliffe, at all, what then?"

"Why, you never mean to say you are going to perpetuate single-blessedness all your life?"

"Upon my word, I don't know but what I shall; if I can get my head out of this noose, I mean."

"Why, the man's crazy! Gone stark, staring mad, as sure as shooting! Do you feel any violent symptoms coming on, my dear fellow? or do you feel like the country swain in the play, 'Hot and dry like, with a pain in your side like? Hadn't I better ring for Norton and the smelling-bottle? I'm afraid you've had a rush of insanity to the brain lately, and that reminds me—this is the full of the moon, isn't it? Where's the almanac?" And Lord Austrey started to his feet, the very picture of consternation.

"Pshaw! Austrey, don't be a—I mean, don't talk nonsense."

"Nonsense, man! I never was so serious before in my life. I should hope I had cause. When a man goes and sets his what's-their-names?—heart's best affections, and all that sort of thing, on his friend, and then sees him a fit subject for Bedlam, it is time to be serious, I think. Give up Norma! What the unmentionable-to-ears-polite has inspired you with that notion, most unhappy youth?"

"Austrey, I wish you would be serious for five minutes," said Disbrowe, springing up and pacing up and down. "I really and truly do want to get out of this business, if I possibly can. You are the only friend I can decently consult on the subject; and as you happen to be a relative of mine, I don't mind speaking to you about it."

"A fifty-fourth cousin, or something of that sort—ain't I? The first tremendous shock is over, and I have steeled my heart, and nothing can move me more. Hand me that bottle of sal volatile. Now I'm prepared for the worst; so make ready—present—fire!"

"Austrey, *will* you stop your nonsense, and listen to

me?" exclaimed Disbrowe, in a rage. "Can't you be sensible for once in your life?"

"Well, there—I'm done!" said Austrey, adjusting the pillow more comfortably under his head. "I'll promise to be as sensible as is consistent with the intellectual faculties nature has gifted me with. Now, state the case. You want to get clear of this contract of yours—do you?"

"Yes."

"But why—what's the reason?"

"Well, I'm in no hurry for marrying for half a dozen years yet, for one thing; and Miss Norma Macdonald does not suit me, for another."

"You're engaged to her—are you not?"

"Yes; but it was an engagement of her father and Earnecliffe's making."

"So! and the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe and Miss Norma had no voice in the matter?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I made no objection. There is a wide difference between a portionless younger brother and a titled earl, you know; and—"

"And the heiress that would have suited Alfred Disbrowe to a T, doesn't exactly come up to the mark for the Earl of Earnecliffe, I see!"

Disbrowe colored slightly.

"It looks rather villainous—doesn't it? But the fact is, I never loved Norma as a man should love the woman he intends to spend his life with; but you know the proverb, more expressive than elegant: 'Needs must when the devil drives!' And I was confoundedly hard up, over head and ears in debt to the children of Israel; and, in fact, there was no help for it, then. Now, however, I have money enough; and upon my soul, Austrey, I cannot tell you how repugnant the idea of this marriage is to me."

There was an almost passionate vehemence in his tone. Lord Austrey looked at him, and slightly smiled.

"I say, Earnecliffe, you didn't leave your heart behind you in America, I hope?"

Disbrowe turned white for a moment, even to his lips. His friend saw his mistake, and instantly regretted what he had said.

"My dear fellow, I beg your pardon! I only spoke in jest; I had no idea—"

"Enough," said Disbrowe, waving his hand. "Say no more about it. But now that you have heard the case, as you call it, what am I to do? I want to get rid of this engagement without hurting the young lady's feelings."

"I wonder if she cares for you?"

"She used to, I think. Time, though, may have changed her in that particular."

"If it hasn't I'll be hanged if I see how you are to get rid of your fetters. You can't go and tell the poor girl you don't care about her, and ask her to cancel the bond. Women are privileged to do such things, but men, unhappily, are not. You would have that old fire-eater, her father, shooting you first, and suing you for a breach of promise after."

"It would be a terrific pitch of fatherly vengeance to shoot me, and make me pay damages, too," said Disbrowe, with a slight laugh. "Heigho! there is nothing for it, then, but yielding to Fate and Miss Norma Macdonald."

"Yes, supposing she is in love with you still; but if, in the meantime, she has went and splashed her affections on somebody else—eh?"

"Oh, in that case, all would be as right as a trivet. I couldn't think of forcing a young lady, you know, against her will."

"Decidedly not. The man who would do such a thing would deserve to be, for the rest of his mortal life, a mark for the finger of scorn to poke fun at. Well, now, suppose I go in and win there, fascinate the young woman, get a rich wife, and clear you, thus obliging myself and my friend at the same time. Q. E. D., that's demonstrated, as that old fool, Numbskull, used to say at Oxford."

"My dear Austrey—you?"

"My dear Earnecliffe. me—decidedly me; nobody else. I flatter myself I'm equal to the task," said the young man, glancing complacently at his handsome face and figure in the glass.

"And you really intend to try to captivate her?"

"I most really and emphatically do."

"*Et puis ?*" said Disbrowe, laughing.

"And then I will make her Lady Austrey; her father wants to get her a title, and I don't see why Austrey is not as good as Earnecliffe. To be sure, you are worth a score of thousands a year, and I about enough to buy kid gloves and pale ale; but he has the gilt, and he might as well let me spend it as anybody else."

"A very delightful scheme, my good friend; and therefore, of course, quite impracticable. Old Macdonald has set his heart on marrying me to his daughter; and do you suppose he will coolly stand by and see you win the golden prize? I don't doubt your success with the lady; she has been shut up like a nun all her life, and will be a regular Eastern bride for exclusiveness; and, being of the intensely-romantic order, will be ready to forget me and love you at a moment's notice; but ah! her father is another affair!"

"What a bore fathers are!" said the young lord, in a tone of displeased criticism. "I don't see why pretty girls need have such things at all. So Miss Norma's romantic—is she? Her idea of a lover, I suppose, is derived from those charming pictures, where the scenery is all balconies, roses, and curtains out of doors, and where a gentleman in tights and a guitar is urging a lady on his knees to go to sea with him in something that looks like a floating cradle, or a hearse amusing itself with a sail. Well, so much the better; she will be all the easier managed, and handsome ladies are privileged to be silly. As to the governor, he's very fond of his daughter—isn't he?"

"Passionately—quite dotes on her."

"All right, then! She'll fall in love with me, that's settled. Obdurate parent will insist on her marrying you. Lady weeps, flings herself at his feet, and bathes them with her tears. Obdurate parent melts—calls to poor but strictly honest lover, who is always on hand, places lovely daughter's hand in his, and says: "Take her, you dog!" Lovers fall at his feet. Obdurate parent stretches out his hands, rolls up his eyes to the ceiling, and apostrophizes the flies: 'Spirit of my sainted Elizabeth, behold my happiness—bless you, my children! may you be



happy!" And then the curtain falls, and there it ends."

"No," said Disbrowe, laughing, "then comes the farce, consisting of a henpecked husband and thirteen tow-headed Normas and Georges."

Lord Austrey made a grimace.

"Ugh! don't mention it! Call that a farce?—a tragedy more likely. Well, but really and truly, and soberly, Earnecliffe, I don't see why this plan should not work."

"We can try it, but I confess I am skeptical. Will you come with me to town?"

"Certainly! when do you go?"

"We may as well start now, I suppose. It will help to kill time, and that, itself, is no trifling consideration. For though the *dolce far niente* is pleasant enough for once in a way, yet there is such a possibility as having too much of a good thing. So I will order horses at once."

He rung the bell as he spoke, and gave the necessary commands, and then arose to divest himself of his dressing gown, and don the coat and pants of out-door life, while Lord George Austrey went off whistling "Hear me, Norma," to make a few alterations in his outer lord also, (if the expression be allowable). How the sad, plaintive air recalled Fontelle and Jacquetta to Disbrowe!

Next morning, at the earliest possible hour that fashion would permit, our two young "peers of the realm," in faultless morning costume, "got up," as Lord Austrey complacently remarked, "regardless of expense," placed their patent-leather boots on the aristocratic doorstep of the Tremain mansion. A porter, quite as aristocratic as the doorstep, admitted them to a sumptuous drawing-room, and left them to themselves.

"I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls," hummed Lord Austrey; "silence and solitude this. I wonder how long Miss Norma will keep us waiting."

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Scarcely had he spoken when the door opened, and a short, roll-about little woman, all smiles and dimples, came in.

"My dear Lord Earnecliffe, welcome home! we were all very sorry, indeed, to hear of your loss, but such

things must be expected in this life. Good-morning, Lord George; it is quite an age since I have seen you. What have you been doing with yourself lately?"

"Rusticating at Disbrowe Park, Mrs. Tremain, admiring the beauties of Nature, and all the rest of it, you know," answered that young gentleman.

"And leaving all the young ladies to wear the willow you naughty boy," said Mrs. Tremain, who was a distant relative of Lord George's, and privileged to talk to him as she pleased. "Positively at Mrs. Desmond's card-party the other night, they were every one asking for you, and went feebly about, like so many drooping lilies, when they heard you had left town. It was quite heart-rending, I assure you!"

"Really now! I wasn't aware I was such a lady-killer. I must endeavor to counteract my many fascinations for the future, I see, in mercy to the tender sex."

"You are hardly looking so well as when I saw you last, my lord," said Mrs. Tremain, turning to Disbrowe. "You are quite pale and thin. Do you not think so, George?"

"All the more interesting, Mrs. Tremain. Young ladies admire that sort of thing, I have heard. Let him keep on a low diet for a fortnight or so, and read the 'Sorrows of Werter' for an hour every day, together with a small dose of 'Paradise Lost,' and I'll bet my diamond ring against a ducat, that by the end of that time he'll be able to play the 'Starved Apothecary,' and have every female woman in Berkely and Grosvenor squares, not to speak of Piccadilly and the West End, over head and ears in love with him."

"Thank you," said Disbrowe. "I had rather be excused. I hope Miss Macdonald is well, Mrs. Tremain?"

"Quite well—she will be here in a moment. How did you enjoy your visit to America, my lord?"

"Very much."

"How is Mr. De Vere? I knew him when we were both younger than we are now, and we were great friends. You visited him, of course?"

"Yes, madam; I spent some weeks with him. He is very well."

"And you really liked America? It is not much like England, I suppose. It must be a strange country, I think, where all classes are on an equality, negro slaves and all. Dreadfully barbarous, I think. I shouldn't like it at all."

Before Disbrowe could reply, the door opened, and Norma Macdonald, the object of all their schemes and plottings, entered—the fair *fiancée* of Lord Earnecliffe.

She was tall and slight, and peculiarly graceful in form, with a complexion of snowy whiteness, unrelieved by the faintest tinge of color, save in the full, rounded lips. Her hair was of a bright golden hue, and was worn in a pretty silk net, something like the present fashion; but instead of the blue eyes that should have accompanied that pearly face and pale-gold hair, her eyes were large, lustrous, and intensely dark. The fair hair and complexion she had inherited from her Scotch father; the dark eyes and romantic nature, from her frail and giddy French mother. A dress of dark blue silk, set off to the best advantage her peculiar style of beauty; and very lovely and very graceful indeed she looked—so much so, that Lord Austrey wondered inwardly at his friend's insensibility, and felt that a prize like this was well worth even his while to try for. Both gentlemen arose upon her entrance, and Disbrowe had to acknowledge that seldom had his eyes rested on one more lovely. He thought of Jacquetta, wild, spirited, daring, bewitching; and she seemed like the dark-hued, brilliant passion-flower of her native land, to a shy fragrant violet, this pale, gentle English girl.

She drooped her large black eyes, and laid her lily hand for a moment in theirs, murmuring a few words of welcome to both, and then retreated to a sofa. Still and reserved she looked, but perfectly easy and self-possessed; yet, as she sat down, there was just the faintest perceptible tinge of pink in those pearly cheeks, called there by some inward feeling.

"I did not know you were in London, my lord," she said, quietly. "I understood you were at Disbrowe Park."

"I was, until yesterday. I heard, then, you were in town, and so called."

"So, then, I am indebted to Norma for the honor of this visit," said Mrs. Tremain; "but, of course, I might have

known you would never have called to see your old friend, but for a fairer magnet."

Disbrowe aroused the old lady by some gay compliment, and Lord George began chatting with Norma—"drawing her out," as he afterward informed Disbrowe, "to see what she was made of."

"And so you have been rambling all summer, too, Miss Macdonald, like our friend here? While he was doing the savage tribes of North America, you were roving through the land of kilts and porridge, 'o'er the muir among the heather.'"

"Come, my lord, speak respectfully of the land of rivers and mountains. Remember, I am a stanch Scotch lassie."

"Oh, your nationality is not likely to be mistaken, while you are called Miss Macdonald. By the way, is Mr. Macdonald in town?"

"No—papa has gone over to Boulogne on business for a few weeks."

"All right," thought Lord George; "the coast is clear—but faith! I begin to fear the young lady is no such easy prize as I thought her."

"And you have been away, too—have you not?" asked the young lady.

"Oh, only out to Disbrowe Park! Splendid place for doing the *dolce far niente*, as Earnecliffe calls it. What does that mean, Miss Macdonald? It's a regular Castle of Indolence, where the sun shines from one year's end to the other, and the very dogs are too lazy to bark."

"Indeed? I hope you have not caught the infection, my lord!"

Before Lord Austrey could indignantly repudiate any such notion, Mrs. Tremain, who had been earnestly conversing with Disbrowe, exclaimed:

"Oh, I am certain Norma knows! Norma, is that portfolio of Emily's in your boudoir? As Lord Earnecliffe has just come from America, I want to show him that American scene you and Emily were trying to finish yesterday."

"My dear aunt!" exclaimed the lady, rising in evident alarm.



"Nonsense! nonsense! My dear lord, she is so bashful about such things, you would never know how well she can draw, if I did not show you. I will go and find it."

For one moment Miss Macdonald stood as if about to follow after her; but meeting the strange eye of Disbrowe, she relinquished her design, and sunk back in evident agitation on the sofa.

"How cruel of you, Miss Macdonald," said Lord Austrey, "to wish to deprive us of the pleasure of looking at the work of your fair hands! I am sure both Earnecliffe and I will be delighted to criticise the drawing, and point out its defects."

"How very gallant! I presume you are about as good a critic as I am an artist. But, indeed, I would rather aunt would not show you this. Emily was reading an American novel the other day, and attempted to sketch a scene it described, and I assisted her; and I am afraid Lord Earnecliffe, who has been over there, will laugh at our poor efforts."

"How can you suspect me of anything so shocking, Miss Norma? Ah! you ought to see those American scenes and draw from life. I am certain, if you are a lover of Nature, and have not quite outlived all your old enthusiasm, you would be delighted with them. If you only could see Fontelle!"

"Fontelle!" exclaimed Lord George. "Is there a Fontelle there, too?"

"Yes—my uncle's residence; and the very moral, as my old nurse used to say, of Fontelle Park—*minus* the park. Well, my dear Mrs. Tremain, did you find the drawing?"

"Yes, my lord; here it is."

She handed him the drawing, and he uttered an ejaculation of amazement as he looked at it. For it was the "Mermaid," and the scenery around it to the very life! There was the river, the shore, the long, straggling, deserted road, the solitary inn, and the hills and woods in the distance. And there, too, out in the river, was the low, dark schooner of Captain Nick Tempest, as he had seen it the first evening he had ridden that way.

"Why, what is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed,

looking up ; " that is the Mermaid Inn for a ducat !—that is the Hudson river, and that schooner is the ' Fly-by-Night,' as sure as my name's Earnecliffe. Why, Miss Norma, are you a magician ? "

She laughed as she met his eyes, but her fair cheeks were crimson.

" Not exactly ! But you are laughing at me, Lord Earnecliffe ! Do you mean to say that poor sketch is like anything you have ever seen ? "

" To the very life ! I have looked on that very scene dozens of times. "

" Something, perhaps, slightly resembling it ? "

" No ; that, as it is, to an iota, without a shadow of difference. Some one must have described this to you, Norma ? "

" Oh ! " said Mrs. Tremain, anxious her own daughter should share the credit, " Emily commenced it from a description she read from a book—probably the scene was laid in that part of America where you were. Norma assisted her to finish it, only. "

" It is an odd circumstance, any way. I wonder what Mr. Rowlie would say, if he knew two English ladies had been sketching his inn ? " And Disbrowe laughed at the idea.

" Who is Mr. Rowlie ? " asked Lord Austrey.

" Oh ! a particular friend of mine—keeps that inn you see there—a glorious old fellow he is, with the nicest little wife ! Shall I tell you all that picture wants, Miss Macdonald, to make it complete ? "

" Oh, yes ! by all means ! What is it ? "

" Well—a rider before the door, horsewhipping an elderly individual with the most villainous face you can possibly draw ; while a boy as handsome as an angel, and dressed like a stage brigand, interferes to keep the peace. You will have a striking scene from life, then. "

" Striking ! " exclaimed Lord George. " Faith ! I should say so—a pretty subject, that, for Miss Macdonald's pencil ! "

After a few more remarks on the subject of the sketch, both gentlemen arose to go. Lord Austrey and Mrs. Tremain were conversing together in one part of the room,

while Disbrowe was taking his departure with Norma. She turned to him with an agitated face, as he arose to go; and without looking up, said, hurriedly, and with a heightened color:

"Lord Earnecliffe, I have something very important to say to you in private, and as soon as may be. When can I see you again?"

Her evident agitation, her downcast face, and hurried voice amazed him.

"At any time you please. I am always at *your* service, Norma."

"Then this evening—are you engaged?"

"No. I have no engagement that I cannot break."

"Then Mrs. Tremain and Emily will be out, and I will be alone. Will you call this evening?"

"I shall be only too happy."

"It is a strange request, I know," she said, coloring in painful embarrassment; "but you will understand me this evening. It is absolutely necessary this interview should take place, and *immediately*. I see Lord Austrey is going; so good-morning, my lord."

He bent over the hand she extended, completely puzzled by her strange manner; and when Lord Austrey had made his adieu, both went out together. The latter gentleman's cab stood at the door, and they sprang in and drove off.

"By Jove! she's a beauty!" enthusiastically exclaimed Lord George, as they dashed along. "I am half in love with her already."

"Which—the aunt or the niece?"

"Oh, pooh! I hope my religious education has not been so far neglected that I did not learn the Commandment: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.' Don't you think *la belle* Norma has improved since you saw her last?"

"Ye-es," said Lord Earnecliffe, slowly. "She has altered, but whether it is an improvement or not, I am not ready to say at this present moment."

"Well, for one thing, she is not such a gushing young female as she was."

"No; but she has, unhappily, gone to the other extreme.

Her manner seemed cold, constrained, unnatural, I thought."

"Oh, that was caused by meeting her betrothed 'afore folks.' If you had been alone, it would have been a different story."

"Well, I am soon likely to know. I am to see her this evening."

"Whew! You're not going there again—are you?"

"Yes. Have you any objection?"

"Yes, I have; most decided objections—most *de-cided* objections! Have you forgotten she is to be Lady Austrey, and that you have given up all right, claim, and title to the lady?"

"Well, no; but, to tell the truth, the engagement was of her own making. She told me she would be alone, and asked me to come."

Lord Austrey fell back, and indulged in a long, wailing whistle of intensest surprise.

"There's Miss Slyboots for you! Oh, your shy ones are never to be trusted! What, in Heaven's name, can she want with you this evening?"

"That is something I did not ask her. To give me my *coupe de congé*, I should judge by her look when giving the invitation. She said it was of the utmost importance, and was to be heard by me alone."

"Well, I am astonished! I say, Earnecliffe, you won't make love to her—will you? Honor bright, you know."

Disbrowe laughingly promised. And they were soon driving through the park, too busy answering bows and salutations to talk further of Norma.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### OFF WITH THE OLD LOVE.

"Was ever woman in this humor wooed!  
Was ever woman in this humor won?  
I'll have her!"

SHAKSPEARE.

FOR some cause or other, Disbrowe felt extremely anxious for the hour to come when he was to see Norma. Her manner, even more than her words, had implied that



the interview betokened something serious and unusual. She had been completely transformed since he had seen her last; changed more than he had thought it possible any one could be in so brief a time; and her manner to him had been something more than reserved—it was rigidly cold. What could be the cause? Was it possible that during his absence she had contracted another attachment, and was anxious to be rid of the old one? “Too good to be true,” he thought, with a sigh, as he strove to account for her agitation and coldness in some other way.

The drawing, too, trivial as the matter was, puzzled him not a little. That any one could have sketched the whole scene so accurately from merely reading a random description, he could not believe; it must have been seen to be so faithfully depicted. Yet who was there to see it? Neither Emily Tremain nor Norma Macdonald had ever visited America, he felt certain; and who was there but himself to describe it to them? Altogether, he felt more completely mystified and puzzled than he had ever been about a small matter in all his life before.

At an early hour that evening, he presented himself at the Tremain House, and was shown by the aristocratic porter respectfully mentioned before, through a “marble hall” into the parlor, and left to his own devices, while the yellow-plush gentleman went to have Miss Macdonald apprised of her visitor.

He had not long to wait. The door presently opened, and Norma entered, paler even than she was in the morning, and looking as when he had seen her last, agitated and troubled.

She scarcely looked up as he advanced to meet her, and shrunk away visibly when he led her to a sofa, and took a seat beside her. But she need not have been alarmed; had he been an archbishop, he could not have behaved with more gravity and decorum. There was very little of the ardent lover about Lord Earnecliffe at that moment. His heart was far over the sea with Jacquetta in her lonely grave.

There was a brief and embarrassed silence, which the lady was the first to break.

"You were doubtless surprised, my lord," she began in a slightly tremulous voice, "by my somewhat strange request, "and I beg—I beg—you will not be offended at what I am about to say."

This was a promising beginning. Disbrowe looked at her, wondering what in the world was to follow this preface.

"Nothing you can say, Norma, will offend me," he replied, scarcely knowing what he was expected to answer to this strange address.

"I wish I could think so. Gentlemen all have a large share of native vanity—have they not?" she said, looking up for the first time with a smile.

"Really, I can't take it upon myself to say positively."

"I have heard so; and if it is true, what I have to say may wound your vanity—and for that I beg pardon beforehand."

"It is granted. Pray go on, Miss Norma; what awful death-blow is my vanity destined to receive from your fair hands?"

She dropped her eyes, and a faint color rose to her cheek.

"It is a serious matter, my lord. You remember—you cannot have forgotten what is—what *was* destined to take place next November?"

"Oh!" he was serious enough now; "no, I have not forgotten—how could I? But, Norma, what do you mean by saying 'was' to take place?"

"Because I hardly think it ever will do so now. Lord Earnecliffe, I know you desire to be free, and I release you once and forever from your engagement!"

"Norma!" he half-sprung from his seat at the first shock. Her beautiful face was as white as monumental marble, but she was also as firm and composed.

"Sit down, my lord. I am certain this does not take you unawares. I feel sure that after this morning you must have had a presentiment of what was coming; and further, you will do anything but grieve, now that you have heard it."

"Norma!"

"It was a bond not of our own making, and it would

gall us both. My father and your brother were the cause of the step you took, and perhaps there were *ten thousand* reasons why you should not at the time decline it."

There was a touch of sarcasm in her tone, and the blood flushed scarlet for a moment to his face.

"I do not intend to reproach you, my lord, but this I will say—you *did wrong*! You should not have led me to believe you loved me, when you knew in your heart you never could or would care for me more than you did for any other of your dear five hundred friends. I was a silly, romantic girl, I know, who, perhaps, needed this lesson to bring her to her senses; but, my lord, I would rather any other hand than yours had struck the blow."

Her lip trembled in spite of herself, and she put her hand for a moment before her face.

"Norma—Norma!" he cried out, passionately, "you wrong me! I *did* love you once!"

"Ah! you *did*," she said, turning her pale face toward him, and lifting her clear, dark, penetrating eyes to his face, "then you do so no longer? I knew it!"

He averted his face, and was silent.

"My lord, answer me," she said, laying her hand earnestly on his arm, "it is better for us both. Answer me on your honor as a gentleman—do you love me *now*?"

"Oh, Norma! forgive me! I never was worthy of your love!"

Her hand dropped. She sat as if turning to stone.

"Have I wronged you beyond réparation? Will you never forgive me, Norma?"

"I forgive you, my lord! I cancel the bond, and you are free!"

"Oh, Norma! fairest and best, you forgive me, but when will I be able to forgive myself!"

"Do not think of it—such things happen every day. It is only the way of the world."

There was an untold depth of bitterness and sorrow in her tone. He did not dare to look at her, but leaned his head on his hand with a groan.

"You have acted as most would have done; and as wisdom is only bought by experience, I will be wiser for

the future. Do not blame yourself too severely, my lord; it all does not rest on you. Others—the dead and the living—have alike erred, yet I suppose they thought they were acting for the best. Let us be thankful it is no worse—we have both cause!”

“Oh, Norma!”

“You have got a fortune and a title, and do not need to make a *mariage de convenance*; and I have discovered it all in time; so things are not so bad, my lord, as they might be.”

“Oh, Norma! What a villain I must seem in your eyes!”

“A villain! Oh, not at all; it is a common thing enough, and habit redeems everything. Perhaps we may both live to be thankful things have ended as they have.

“But your father, Norma?”

“My father loves me well enough to sacrifice even his long-cherished plan at my wish. I have only to say I do not wish this engagement to be fulfilled, and he will leave me as free as air.”

“Norma, did you ever love me?” he asked—his man’s vanity, as she rightly judged, wounded by her apparent coldness; for when men, the generous creatures! renounce the woman who has once told them she loved them, they like to think of her as pining away, and dying of a broken heart, and all that sort of thing, for their sake; and Lord Alfred Earnecliffe, though an English peer, was just made of the same clay as his more plebeian brethren.

“My lord,” she said, with a dark, bright flash of her eye that reminded him of Jacquetta, “you have no right to ask that question!”

“Perhaps not, but I fancy there has been little love lost on your side, and that you are very glad to be rid of me.”

“Ah,” she said, with a half-smile, “did I not say your masculine vanity would be wounded? Confess, now, it would be balm of Gilead for you to see me shedding floods of tears, and bemoaning like a tragic heroine my hard fate.”

“No, I hope I am not quite so selfish. Since we must



part, I am glad you mind it so little—yes, I am!” he said, trying hard to convince himself he spoke the truth.

“Thank you! And now, my lord, let me ask you a question—do you intend remaining for the present in England?”

“Yes, I rather think so. I am tired of rambling.”

“That is well. I want to go abroad and travel for a year or two on the Continent; and if you were going, I should remain where I am. So, when Mrs. Tremain and Emily leave next month, I shall go with them.”

“But you are sure your father will make no objections to this overthrow of all his plans?”

“No; on the contrary, I am quite sure he *will* object, but I think I can persuade him to let me do as I please. One thing I dread, and that is, what the world will say. I am mortified to death to think papa made this unfortunate engagement known.”

“It would be better, perhaps, had he not; but the world shall know how it is—that I am a rejected lover. I shall then have the consolation of being pitied by bright eyes and rosy lips without number.”

She smiled—but her smile was as faint and cold as a moonbeam on snow, and she arose, to signify that their interview was at an end.

“You will excuse me, my lord; my head aches, and I am unable to entertain you just now. As this is probably the last time we will see each other alone, I will bid you good-by, since to-night, as betrothed lovers, we part forever.”

She held out her hand. He took it in both of his, and looked sadly in her face. It was strange, now that the desire of his heart was attained, how lonely and grieved he felt.

“It is a hard word to say, Norma, and harder still to think you and I must henceforth meet as strangers.”

“You may think so to-night. To-morrow you will rejoice.”

“Well, be it so. Farewell, Norma.”

“Adieu, my lord.”

“Oh, Norma! not that. Say Alfred, as you used to, ‘lang syne.’”

"Good-by, Alfred. Heaven send you some one you can love, and who will love you."

"A wish, Norma, that will never be fulfilled; but I thank you all the same. And so—"

He shook hands, and, with a last look at the pale, fair face, and tall, graceful figure, he turned, and left her alone.

And so was broken the tie that was to bind those two through life.

It was in a strange state of mind Lord Earnecliffe hurried along to rejoin his friend. Pleasure and regret, and a strange mortified feeling were at war within, and when he entered the room where Lord Austrey lay stretched on a sofa, solacing himself with a cigar and the last *Punch*, he flung himself into a chair, and looked half moodily at the nonchalant young lord.

"Well, my beloved Damon, what news? What terrific mystery of iniquity has been brought to light? In what state of mind did you leave her peerless highness, Princess Norma?"

"Hadn't you better go on with the catechism? Ask a few more questions before you stop: What is the chief end of man? What do the Scriptures principally teach? Go, on, why don't you?"

"Pshaw! what was this mysterious interview all about? If the question is impertinent don't answer it."

"Oh, I will answer it readily enough! It is something you will be very glad to hear. Her peerless highness has rejected the slave, and you behold before you a discarded suitor."

Lord Austrey half rose, and took his cigar between his finger and thumb.

"Eh? What? Just say that again, will you?"

Disbrowe laughed.

"I am discarded, rejected, refused, jilted! Is that plain enough to suit your limited capacity, my young friend?"

Up sprung Lord Austrey to his feet, and, flinging away his cigar, he stretched out his arm, and putting on that enthusiastic expression all Othellos wear, exultingly cried:

"'Excellent wench! perdition catch my soul!  
But I do love thee; and when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again!'

What's the rest, Earnecliffe? I haven't seen Othello played lately. Deuce take that cigar! I have burned my fingers."

"What a loss you are to the stage, Austrey! If Nature had not made you a British peer, you would have been a treasure beyond price, to do the high-tragedy business. Have you ever turned your thoughts to the stage as the means of earning an honest living?"

"Bah! don't talk nonsense! I want to hear all the particulars. Are you really, and truly, and seriously jilted?"

"I really, and truly, and seriously am!"

"Good! Fate has turned the cold shoulder to me ever since I was old enough to know the lady; but I felt sure she would smile at last. And she has, you see. Norma's mine!"

"Don't be too sure. She may serve you as she has me."

"No fear. The little Macdonald has better taste. But what reason did the damsel give?"

"None at all, except that I did not love her—and, faith! she hit the right thing in the middle just then. And so the engagement was broken, now and forever. I felt about three inches high at the time, I can tell you!"

"*Te Deum!* What a slice of good luck for George of Austrey! What is papa going to say about it?"

"Oh! she has promised to make it all right there. She will bring him to view matters in their proper light, she says. She goes abroad with the Tremains next month."

"Better and better! I'll be an *attaché* of that embassy, or know for why. I never was properly thankful before that my maternal ancestor and Mrs. Tremain were twenty-second cousins, or something; but it just suits me exactly now! Won't I console our pretty Norma on the way! 'Make hay while the sun shines'; there's nothing like it," cried Lord George, in a hazy recollection of some proverb.

"Well, I hope you'll be successful, of course," said Disbrowe, feeling dreadfully hypocritical; for he was

amazed, he could scarcely tell why, by his friend's resolution of success.

"Successful! Of course I will. There is no time when a girl is more disposed to smile on a new lover than after she has discarded an old one; and, ahem! a Lord George Austrey is not to be come across every day, I flatter myself. So, when Norma comes back to England, you may be ready with your congratulations, my Lord of Guilford and Earnecliffe."

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A SECRET SORROW.

"I have a secret sorrow here—  
A grief, I'll ne'er impart;  
It heaves no sigh—it sheds no tear,  
But it consumes the heart."

THREE days after, Lord Earnecliffe went back to Disbrowe Park, leaving his friend in London—a constant visitor at Tremain House. Whatever Miss Macdonald felt, she had enough of the pride of Albion's stately daughters to conceal; and she rode, and walked, and drove, and went to the theater and the opera nightly; and Lord Austrey was always of their party. His distant relationship to the Tremains stood him in good stead now, and he took care not to be too particular in his attentions, but to be quite as devoted to Emily Tremain as to Norma Macdonald. He left it to time to ripen their acquaintance to a warmer feeling. And Lord George acted wisely. A handsome face and figure, and gallant bearing, seldom fail to please ladies; and Lord George could be agreeable, not to say fascinating even, when he chose. Miss Macdonald might have the bad taste to be insensible to his manifold attractions just at present, while the wound her first love had received was still rankling; but there was a good time coming, and Lord George, being none of your fiery mad-headed lovers, was quite content to wait, and console himself with the maxim: "*Mieux vaut tard que jamais.*"

And at the end of the month, having given himself an



invitation to join their party, which Emily Tremain—who called him “Cousin George,” and considered him delightful—had warmly seconded, they all set off together for France. Norma, too, was not displeased at this new acquisition to their party; for Lord George was an unfailing antidote against *ennui* and depression of spirits, keeping Emily Tremain especially, who had a strong natural taste for the ludicrous, in fits of laughter continually.

Just before starting, Lord George sent an epistle, rather of the short and sweet order, to his friend, to announce his success.

“MY DEAR ALF:—We are off—to-morrow will find us *en route* for Paris. The battle is won! Norma is mine, as certainly as if she was signed, sealed, and delivered! What a superb beauty it is—*ma belle reine*! Ah, Earnecliffe! you don’t know what you have lost! But one man’s loss is another man’s gain; and so *bene dicite*!

AUSTREY.”

Lord Earnecliffe read it, as he lay slippered and dressing-gowned in his room, *ennuyée* nearly to death, and an expression, half-angry, half-contemptuous, came over his face. How little she must ever have loved him to forget him so soon!

A life of inaction, of stagnation, was little suited to the gay, volatile nature of Alfred Disbrowe; yet some perverse spirit seemed to possess him now, and hold him in chains at Disbrowe Park. He scarce ever went to London. He visited but little among the neighboring gentry, and seldom ever saw any one at the hall. He rarely rode, or hunted, or quitted home, and, altogether, became a sort of anchorite—a hermit—a Robinson Crusoe, shut up and fortified in his “castle.”

The young ladies of the neighborhood pouted, and were terribly mortified to find the handsome and wealthy young peer so insensible to all their fascinations, while the sentimental ones looked upon him with romantic interest, and fell in love with his dark, melancholy eyes, and sighed to comfort him in his solitude.

Having nothing better to do, Disbrowe amused himself

with looking after his tenantry and improving his estate ; and this, with lying lazily on a sofa, and smoking no end of cigars, constituted his indolent and aimless life.

He felt a little ashamed of himself sometimes, and his useless existence. But a spell—a languor of mind and body—was upon him, and he wanted a motive to make him rise, like another Sampson, and burst his bonds.

So passed the winter ; and spring and summer found him still loitering at Disbrowe Park.

At odd times he received short, spasmodic letters from his friend Austrey, to tell him they were “doing” gondolas in Venice, or Saint Peter’s at Rome, or risking their necks up the great Saint Bernard, or other cold and uncomfortable places in the Splugen Alps. According to his account, their travels were something in the style of the “Dodd Family Abroad”—a continued series of mishaps and misadventures, together with jealous Austrian governments, rampagious Italian beggars, savage and unreasonable couriers, or ferocious, brigandish guides, who would persist in not understanding him—Lord George—when he swore at them in English, and screamed out his directions in the same language. He further went on to express the strongest sort of contempt for the whole Continent, vehemently asserted England, with all its fogs, was the only place fit for a rational Christian to live in. As for foreign scenery, he had a poor opinion of it. The Rhine was well enough, but not fit to hold a candle to the Serpentine, and as for Baden, Ramsgate was worth a dozen of it. All this had very little interest for Disbrowe ; but the postscript had, where Lord George wound up by informing him Norma was in excellent health and spirits, and “his affair” was progressing as “well as could be expected.” At first, this used to invariably put Disbrowe in a fume ; but he got used to it after a time, and almost as indifferent about Norma as the rest. Her father had joined them, evidently quite reconciled to the broken-off match, and, what was better still, great friends with the volatile young lord. It was quite uncertain when they would come back, but probably not until late the next autumn.

Of his American friends, since his arrival in England,

he had heard nothing. As time cooled and toned down his feelings, he began to regret the hasty manner in which he had left his uncle's roof, who, harshly as he had treated *her* whom Disbrowe never named now, even in his own mind, had been always kind to him.

Therefore, in a fit of patience, during the previous winter, he had written him a long and cordial letter, urging him to come to England, and visit him at Disbrowe Park, and bring Augusta and little Oriole with him.

It was strange, how ardently he wished to see the little, wild, elfish girl again; partly for her own sake, and the strange, strong love she bore him, and partly for her mother's sake—that dead mother, his first, his last, his only love.

No answer had come, although the June roses were in blossom, and the letter had been written in December, until, one morning, the mail brought him a brief note, in the well-known writing of Mr. De Vere. It was dated London, and informed him that he, and Augusta, and Orrie had arrived, and awaited him there.

Disbrowe took time to digest his surprise and pleasure, and immediately started for London, and went direct to their hotel. And then there was one of those pleasant meetings of old friends, that gleam like bright little flashes of unalloyed sunshine through this tangled life of ours, more than compensating us for the sorrow of parting.

Mr. De Vere looked half a dozen years older than when he had seen him last, and had a dreary, lonely look, the cause of which Disbrowe well understood. But Augusta was still more changed; she had wasted away to a shadow, with white, sunken cheeks, and hollow, lustrous eyes looking unnaturally dark and large in her thin and haggard face. All her old hauteur and lofty pride seemed to have faded away like a dream, and she stood before him dejected, spiritless, ghastly—like a spirit from the grave.

The deep mourning she wore contrasted glaringly with her pallid face and blue-veined, transparent hands, and Disbrowe was inexpressibly shocked and grieved as he beheld her.

And Orrie—he scarcely recognized her in the richly-

attired, half-timid little miss, who shrunk back and eyed him askance with a glance half shy, half laughing, that reminded him with a thrill and a shock of Jacquetta. A year—most of it spent in the artificial atmosphere of a fashionable boarding-school—had robbed little Orrie of most of her eldritch boldness and brightness; but still it broke out fitfully at times. She had lost, partly, her wild, elfish, precocious look, too; and with her shining, coal-black hair smoothly braided, and her pretty dress of rich black silk, she was quite another being from the wild little kelpie in boy's clothes who had once stabled his horse. They all seemed to have changed; and Disbrowe half sighed as he took her in his arms and kissed her, and inwardly wondered if he had changed, too.

"And Frank," he said, "how is he?"

"Frank is quite well," said Mr. De Vere. "I got him a midshipman's commission, last winter, and he has gone off like a second Jack to seek his fortune. We found Fontelle terribly dull, and your kind invitation came at a most opportune moment. Change of climate may do something for Augusta, whose health is failing rapidly."

"I noticed Miss De Vere was not looking well," said Disbrowe, lowering his voice that she might not hear. "She is greatly changed since I saw her last. What is the matter?"

"That is a question I cannot answer," replied her father, with a sigh. "She has no bodily ailment, the doctors say; but something is evidently preying on her mind, undermining both life and happiness. In fact, she has never been the same since that visit of old Grizzle Howlet's, whatever she told her. Since that time she has pined and faded away; and if I believed in the Evil Eye, I should say my poor Augusta was its under influence."

"Have you never tried to discover what this strange secret is?"

"Repeatedly; but in vain. Augusta only wrings her hands, and cries for me to leave her, until I have no longer the heart to resist. Oh, Alfred, my boy, it goes to my heart to see her suffering like this," said Mr. De Vere, with filling eyes.

Disbrowe pressed his hand in silent sympathy.



"Do you think she would tell you, Alfred? She liked you, and she might. Do you really think she would?" he said, eagerly.

"I fear not, sir. When she refused to tell you, it is not likely she would make me her confidant—a comparative stranger."

"I am sorry! I am sorry! If she would only speak and tell, it might save her life—the poor Augusta—my poor, poor girl!"

"Does Grizzle Howlet still reside at the old inn?" asked Disbrowe, after a pause, to divert his mind from the subject.

"Yes, the old limb of Satan! Oh, Alfred! that a wretched old hag like that should have caused us all so much misery!"

"Her day of retribution will come; be assured of that, sir!" said Disbrowe, almost sternly. "And her *bon frère*, Captain Tempest, what has become of him?"

"Gone off in the 'Fly-by-Night' on one of his dark, devil's cruises of crime. He went shortly after you left. By the way, Alfred, can you tell me anything of that young Spanish lad, Jacinto? We never could hear anything about him after *that day*."

"Yes," said Disbrowe, over whose handsome face a dark shadow fell—the memory of that sad day. "Yes, he came with me to London; and, uncle, he was treated ungenerously. That boy was guiltless of all wrong."

"I know it—I know it?" groaned Mr. De Vere. "Old Grizzle to taunt, to madden me, I believe, came with that villain Tempest to Fontelle, one day, and derisively told me all she had said about Jacquetta was false; all save in one particular—her being the daughter of this reckless freebooter. Jacquetta knew nothing of her father, nor of her mother, except that she was one of the frail and erring of her sex; and that never in the slightest action had her marriage vows been broken: that she knew nothing of Orrie save her birth, and that, oh, Alfred! that she refused you, loving you all the while. My poor boy! it was a sad day for you both when you met."

Disbrowe sat with averted head, his eyes shaded by his hand, and made no reply.

"And my poor, poor, wronged Jacquetta! My high-spirited, broken-hearted girl! Oh, Alfred! I can never forgive myself for the great wrong I have done her," groaned Mr. De Vere.

"She was cruelly wronged, sir; but you acted from a sense of duty, and were not so much to blame. Let the dead rest; I had rather not speak of her."

"Her loss, too, has preyed on the mind of Augusta," said Mr. De Vere, recurring to the former subject; "and, combined with the death of her mother, has increased the depression of her spirits, and left her as you see Ah! Alfred, I am not very happy in my children!"

"Her brother?" said Disbrowe, with a start. "Do you mean—"

"My unhappy idiot son? Yes, he is gone," said Mr. De Vere, in a husky voice.

Disbrowe turned away in silence. "Had Jacquetta been alive!" was his thought; and a pang more bitter than he ever thought he could have felt for her again, pierced his heart.

It was arranged that they should spend a week in London before proceeding further, to enable Augusta to recover from the fatigue of her journey. Mr. De Vere was busy enough during that time in receiving and returning the visits of his old friends; and at the end of the week they all set off for Disbrowe Park.

Bright and radiant in the golden glow of a June evening, the stately home of Lord Earnecliffe had never looked more beautiful. Mr. De Vere's eyes lit up with pleasure and recognition as he saw it; Orrie clapped her hands in delight, and cried: "Oh, how pretty!" and even Augusta's languid eyes sparkled with new and pleased animation.

"It is a beautiful place—an Arabia Felix—a garden of delight—a home for a queen!" she said, turning to Disbrowe whose dark eyes were bright with pleasure and, pride.

"I am glad you like it; it was my boyhood's home, and my fathers', for many a generation, and so doubly dear to me."

"God bless old England!" cried Mr. De Vere, his eyes

filling with tears. "It does my old heart good to look on her sunny homesteads once more."

"Oh, what pretty fountains, and flowers, and avenues, and trees!" exclaimed little Orrie, her black eyes sparkling like glass beads. "And, oh, Gusty! look at the birds in those pretty little houses; and see the bees away over there; and, oh, look at that dear little church, with the splendid red and yellow windows! Oh, how nice!" cried Orrie, clapping her hands.

Disbrowe laughed at her enthusiastic admiration, which reminded him of the Orrie of other days.

"And Miss Orrie shall have a pony, too," he said, gayly. "Wait until you see the pretty little white Arab I have for you. Can you ride?"

"Oh, yes!—first rate. Can't I, grandpa?"

"So you say; but self-praise, you know, is no recommendation, my little girl."

"Oh, I know!" said Orrie, shrugging her shoulders. "Miss Smith used to give us that for a copy; but I *can* ride, though, ever so well. Frank learned me."

"Taught you," amended Mr. De Vere.

"Oh! bother! I am so glad you have got a pony for me, cousin Alfred! May I call you cousin Alfred, as Frank used to do?"

"Of course—what else would you call me?"

"And may I ride out to-morrow morning?"

"You will be too tired to-morrow morning, after your journey—won't you?"

"Oh, la!—no," said Orrie, with one of her shrill laughs at the idea, of such a thing. "I'm never tired. Oh, what a pretty house it is, any way!—twice as nice as Fontelle!"

"And yet you used to think Fontelle a very beautiful place, Orrie."

"Oh I know! that when was I lived with old Grizzle—the nasty old thing!—and it was a great deal nicer than her house, but not near so nice as this. Oh, I should love to live here forever!"

"Unhappily, people don't live forever in England, *ma chere fille*; but you shall stay as long as I can keep you. You will miss Frank—will you not?"

"Yes, some—we used to quarrel so, you know, until grandpa sent me to school in—oh, just the horriest place in the world! I didn't like it at all. I'd a great deal rather grandpa had let me been a sailor, and went to sea with Frank in—oh, such a lovely great big ship, and *such* a sight of ropes! And Frank looked so splendid in his nice jacket, with all the bright buttons, and his cap with gold on it. Oh, he looked lovely!" cried Orrie, enthusiastically, laying great emphasis on her notes of admiration.

"Indeed!" laughed Disbrowe. "I should have liked to have seen him. And you used to quarrel when you were both at Fontelle?"

"Oh, yes! Frank used to get so ugly sometimes—it was all his fault, you know—and we used to have such a time! We made it all up, though, you know, before he left; and Frank says we will be married as soon as ever he comes back."

"Ah! that will be pleasant—won't it? When is he to come back?"

"In two or three years. That is a good long time, ain't it—but I don't mind, so long as I've got a pony. Oh, cousin Alfred, how nice you are!"

"Uncommonly so! The admirable Crichton was nothing to me! But here we are at the house; and now, mademoiselle, we will see whether the inside suits you as well as the outside."

The servants, who had been apprised of their lord's approach, were drawn up in the hall to receive him as he entered with Augusta on his arm; and Orrie looked about her, quite awe-struck by their number and the splendor around her.

"Ain't this lovely, grandpa?" she said, in a whisper, giving him a pull.

"Very fine, kitten—a grand old manor."

"And such a lot of servants! Oh, my!"

"Hush! they will hear you. Do you like it better than Fontelle?"

"I guess I do! I wish you would live here all the time, and not go back to Fontelle."

"But, it's not my house, monkey, and so I can't. It is Lord Earnecliffe's, you know."



"Well—but he would let you stay, I guess. I mean to ask him, anyway."

"But that is not polite. People should not invite themselves. You must wait until he asks you."

Orrie gave a little impatient shrug.

"It's such a bother being polite, and I don't see any good in it, either. See here, grandpa—cousin Alfred isn't married, is he?"

"Not as I am aware of, my little nettle—why?"

"He ain't going to be, is he?"

"Well, I can't say positively—you had better ask himself that. Have you any intentions of proposing to him?"

"No; you know I haven't. Didn't I tell you I was going to wait for Frank?" said the young lady, with dignity. "But I thought he might marry Gusty, and then we could all live here—couldn't we?"

"Frank and all, I suppose," said Mr. De Vere, laughing. "A rare plan, hornet, but I don't know what cousin Alfred and Gusty would say about it. You had better ask them—hadn't you?"

"I'm going to," said Orrie, as she turned to follow a spruce chambermaid to her room to be dressed for dinner.

The suggestion of Disbrowe's marriage recalled something Mr. De Vere had partially forgotten—that he was to have been married the previous year. It was a delicate subject, but he determined to ask Disbrowe the reason, and an opportunity occurred when they were left alone to chat over the "walnuts and the wine" after dinner.

"My dear Alfred, I expected to find you a happy Benedick by this time," he said, carelessly. "How comes it that you are suffering single blessedness still?"

"The match was broken off," said Disbrowe, looking intently at the orange he was peeling.

"Ah?" said Mr. De Vere, inquiringly.

"Yes, by the lady's desire. She did not fancy ratifying a contract she had no hand in making; and so she is Miss Norma Macdonald still."

"But I thought you said she loved you?"

"Well, I may have been mistaken—I don't pretend to be infallible; and, even if she did, young ladies easily get

over such things. Try that sherry, uncle—it ought to be good, if age can make it so.”

“*Vous vivez en roi!*” said Mr. De Vere, with a smile. “What a Sybarite you are, Alfred, in this luxurious home of yours!”

“Yes; as far as the good things of this world go, I believe I have got my share; but is there any one living, my dear uncle, who has not still some wish unfulfilled—some dreary *if*, never to be realized?”

“And yours is—”

“Where I left my heart—in the tomb of Jacquetta,” he said, sadly.

“Strong love—strong and true! Oh, that Jacquetta had lived to be your wife!”

“Too late—it is something I cannot think of calmly, even to this day. How little I dreamed, when I first saw Fontelle, that my dream, my hope, my day-star, was to rise within its walls. How little I dreamed, when I first met her, of all she was destined to be to me!”

There was a long pause, broken first by Disbrowe, who never would dwell long on that subject, and now turned the conversation on some other topic. And Mr. De Vere noticed that he never again spoke on the subject.

For a brief time it seemed as if the change of scene and air had really been of service to Augusta, and that both health and spirits were improving; but it was only a momentary rallying, that soon passed away, and left her spiritless and drooping as before. Her former dark despair and wild bursts of anguish and remorse, alike seemed to have passed away, and a dead, inane listlessness—a dull, lifeless stupor—a blank, hopeless calm, terrible to see, had taken their place. For hours she would sit with folded hands, white, cold, and voiceless, her large, dark eyes fixed on the floor; a living automaton, a breathing statue, a moving figure of ice. Mr. De Vere was in despair; no effort could arouse her from her lethargy; no amusement could win a smile from her; no excitement could arouse interest—nothing could awake her from her trance.

Disbrowe was puzzled and interested, his curiosity was excited, and that, mingled with a feeling of pity, made

him half determined to ask the reason of this mysterious grief. He felt that this very secrecy itself was augmenting the original source of her trouble, whatever it might be; and that once she took some one into her confidence, this morbid sinking, from sheer lack of sympathy, would vanish like morning mists before the sun. As a nettle, which sharply stings if daintily touched, is harmless if boldly grasped, so inward grief, if nursed in silence, festers and rankles, while, dauntlessly confronted, it hides its diminished head, and sinks comparatively into nothing.

One still, serene moonlight night, leaving Mr. De Vere dozing over the *Times*, and Orrie amusing herself with her *bonne* and a book of prints, Disbrowe strolled idly out, attracted by the gentle hush of the charmed hour. Sauntering down the long, shaded, laurel walk, he suddenly stopped in astonishment at beholding Augusta, half-sitting, half-lying on a bench, her long hair, unbound and soaked with the night-dew, streaming around her; her face hidden in her hands, her whole attitude so full of woe, so crushed, so heart-broken, that a thrill of terror and pity shot through the young earl's heart.

In her passionate *abandon* she heard not his approaching footsteps, and it was only when he gently tried to remove her hands that she uttered a startled cry and sprung up, so white, so wild, so terrified, such a shadow of her former self, that he had no words to express his deep pity.

"Augusta, my dearest cousin, what is this? Do you not know the danger of sitting out here in the night-dew?"

She did not reply. She flung herself back in her seat, and hid her face once more in her hands with a groan.

"Augusta, will you not tell me what this means? Can I not help you in any way? Will you not trust your cousin?"

"I dare not! I dare not tell you! You would shrink from me in horror if I did.

"Not so, Augusta. Are you not my cousin—almost my sister? Dear Augusta, whatever this mysterious secret may be, you may safely trust me. And who knows but it may be in my power to aid you."

"No, no. You cannot—you cannot! It is beyond mortal aid!" she despairingly wailed.

"Augusta, it is killing you—this secrecy. Why not tell your father—surely you can trust him?"

"Oh! not to him! not to him! I would sooner tell you a thousand times. Oh, Lord Earnecliffe! if you only knew."

"Will you not tell me, Augusta? Dear Augusta, it is some power this old wretch, who has already wrought so much evil to us all, holds over you—is it not?"

"Oh! yes, yes! She alone and one other know."

"It is some imaginary power, then—some clever scheme she has concocted, and which will prove to be nothing but empty threats and vapor. Courage, Augusta! speak out and tell what it is, and you will find it nothing but thin air. Do not think, Augusta, that I urge you to tell through impertinent curiosity; but for your own peace of mind you ought to make a confidant of some one. You do not know how evils shrink and cower when boldly looked in the face, and how they grow into huge misshapen monsters when dreaded. Come, Augusta, exorcise this demon that haunts you, and be yourself once more."

His bold, frank tone, his easy confidence, his spirited, fearless voice, acted powerfully upon her. She lifted her eyes to the bold, resolute, handsome young face, and with a sudden impulse she said:

"I will tell you! I will! Let the result be what it may, you shall know all, and learn if I have not cause enough for misery. Oh, Alfred! there never, never was guilt equal to mine!"

"That remains to be seen. I have seen more of guilt than you have, I fancy, and will judge presently. Come, Augusta, where is the pride and courage of your De Vere blood now? Courage! I promise you not to faint."

He seated himself beside her, and took both her hands in his, and looked brightly in her face.

"Now, Augusta."

"Oh, Alfred! how shall I tell you? How shall I tell you my dark, guilty story. Yes, guilt! Do not start—though Heaven knows it was unintentionally committed. Listen. Perhaps you did not know I had two brothers."



"No, I did not know. I never heard of but one."

"Poor Aubrey! he is at rest. Well, I had another brother younger than Aubrey, and some four or five years older than me, of whom I remember nothing as a child, for I was but three months old when he was lost."

"Lost!"

"Yes. Oh, Alfred, you do not know how dark a doom has ever rested on all of our ill-fated family, and on me and him darkest of all."

"But how was he lost, Augusta? Did he die?"

"No; he was stolen. There were marauding parties of hostile Indians about at the time, and it was no new thing for them to take children and women prisoners, who were sometimes killed, sometimes ransomed, and sometimes kept by the tribe."

"And which was your brother's fate?"

"Neither. They strove in vain to gain any intelligence of him; they finally gave him up in despair; they thought he was dead. Would to God he had been!"

"Augusta!" cried Disbrowe, shocked.

She looked up with a hard, dark, despairing face.

"Is there no fate worse than death? The dead are at rest; but there is a living death of guilt, and anguish, and remorse, that never knows rest. The latter was reserved for his fate and mine."

"Go on, Augusta."

"You know, very likely, that these Indians were in league with the Tories, and that the whites were very often worse than the red-men. Among those demons in human form was the brother of Grizzle Howlet. Till, they call him—a morose and bloodthirsty human tiger, who hated papa for some real or fancied wrong he had once done him. He was at the Indian village when my little brother, Wilton, was brought there with other prisoners, and knew him instantly. How he exulted when he saw him! It was a prospect of revenge beyond price to him. Most of the other prisoners were slaughtered in cold blood; but he ordered them not to hurt a hair of Wilton's head; and, having some authority among them, he was obeyed. Wilton was adopted by the chief of the tribe, and brought up in all respects as if he had been his

son; taught to hunt, and shoot, and live the life of an Indian boy, and treated as the son of an Indian chief. Old Till's object was to keep him there until he had grown up, and then present the half-savage young Indian to my father as his long-lost son."

"Well?"

"He did not succeed—would to God he had! even that would have been better than the fate that awaited him. Wilton, child as he was, when abducted, had a vague remembrance still of the far different life he had left; and though he lived the life of an Indian, he had not an Indian heart. The desire of escape was with him night and day, but he was carefully watched and guarded, and for a long time no opportunity occurred. In fact, he was ten years old before he was able to make his escape from the tribe."

"He did escape, then?"

"Yes—after perils and hardships innumerable, he reached the nearest town, ignorant of his name, birth-place, and family; for the Indians had given him a new name, and a child of five soon forgets. His story made him friends, though, and one of them obtained him a situation as cabin-boy on board a man-of-war."

"Of course, none of your family knew all this at the time?"

"No, they knew nothing of him—nor does my father till this day; all this I have learned of late. Well, he grew up a sailor; rose to the rank of lieutenant in one of the United States ships-of-war, under the name of his first friend, which he had adopted—that of Scott."

"Well?" said Disbrowe, as she made a long pause.

"Oh! how shall I go on with the rest—how shall I speak of myself and my deed of madness. Oh, Alfred! I cannot tell you!" she wildly cried.

"Go on, Augusta, and fear not! I think I suspect what is to come."

"You do? what do you suspect?"

"That you somehow met this unknown brother of yours, and—"

"Well?" she whispered, hoarsely.

"And fell in love with him!"

"Oh! worse—worse—worse! A thousand-fold worse! Oh, cousin Alfred, I—I—"

"Augusta!"

"Oh, Alfred! I *married him!*"

With a wild, shivering cry, she sunk down, and lay white and shuddering, with her face in her hands. Disbrowe started, and an expression of horror came for a moment to his face; the next, he raised her up, and said, gently and tenderly:

"Augusta, tell me how it was. Augusta, dearest, do not tremble so dreadfully. Look up, and tell me all."

She took her white hands from her pallid tortured face, and spoke in a voice scarce above a whisper.

"I was visiting a friend, and went with her to a ball on board his ship; I met him there—we loved each other, and—Oh, my God! you know the rest!"

"You married him secretly?"

"Yes, I knew my father never would consent, on account of his poverty and low birth, and most of all, for his being a rebel against the king. He loved me passionately, and I—I—was mad, delirious, and consented to a private marriage. Oh, Alfred—Alfred! was there ever guilt like to mine?"

"My dear Augusta—my poor Augusta, you are not guilty—you did not know. Go on, let me hear all."

"I thought our marriage was unknown; but it was not; a son of Grizzle Howlet—oh! why was all belonging to that wretched woman destined to be our evil destiny through life!—was in the church, and saw us and heard our names. The hour of our marriage we parted, he to return to sea, and I to go to Fontelle. Two months after, you came, and but for that I might still be ignorant of my dreadful crime."

"But for me!" exclaimed Disbrowe, in amaze, "why, Augusta?"

"Even so. You remember your narrow escape from being murdered, and how to save herself, it brought Grizzle next day to the hall?"

"Yes—yes!"

"To save herself, she told me what I have just told you, that I had wedded my own brother; and she threat-

ened to make my guilt public, if I did not save her from the effects of my father's anger. The shock almost killed me. You have not forgotten that dreadful morning, nor how I pleaded for Grizzle on my recovery, and obtained her freedom. Oh, Alfred, I would sooner have been burned at the stake than that my father should ever know."

"But, my dear Augusta, you are insane to believe a tale trumped up for the occasion by such a woman as this villainous old Grizzle Howlet. It is in all probability false, every word of it."

"No—no! there is no such hope for me; her brother and the chief of the tribe still live to prove its truth; and to make assurance doubly sure, she told me to ask himself, and see if her story was not true."

"And did you?"

"Yes, he came a short time after your arrival, and wrote to appoint a meeting one night, and that night I met him for the last time."

Her voice choked, and she stopped. Disbrowe thought of the dark, muffled figure he had seen with her that night at the north wing.

"I told him all; and, oh, Alfred, word for word it was true. He had been stolen in his infancy; he did remember old Till perfectly, and he had escaped just as Grizzle told me. Oh! that last dreadful parting! God grant I might ever forget it!"

"And this, then, is your secret, Augusta?"

"This is my secret—my dark, terrible secret—that is gnawing away my very heart—that in a few brief months will bring me to my grave. May God forgive us both, for we little thought of this!"

"And he—where is he, Augusta?"

"A wanderer over the wide world. We will never meet again."

She sunk down once more on her seat, collapsed, prostrate, despairing. A bright gleam of moonlight broke through the quivering laurel leaves, and fell like the wing of some pitying angel on that despair-bowed young head.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

## RESURGAM.

“ —With wild surprise,  
As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,  
A single moment motionless he stood.”

—THOMSON.

“ LORD AUSTREY, my lord.”

It was Mr. Norton—that respectable gentleman’s gentleman—who spoke. Disbrowe, after his usual easy fashion, was lounging in his own room, chatting with Orrie, but on hearing his friend’s name announced, he sprung to his feet with a suddenness quite startling.

“ Lord Austrey—when? how? where?”

“ Whither—why—wherefore!” exclaimed the well-known voice of Lord Austrey, himself, as he unceremoniously entered. “ I took the liberty of entering *sans ceremonie* you see. Earnecliffe, *mon ami*, how goes it?”

“ Austrey, my dear old fellow!” exclaimed Disbrowe, “ welcome back! When did you come?”

“ Two or three days ago. Hallo! a young lady in the case! Why, Alf, what have you been about since I left?”

“ Oh! this is a little Yankee friend of mine, Oriole De Vere—oh! she’s gone! Well, Austrey, how has the world been using you lately?”

“ Enchantingly—I’m a made man, Earnecliffe, and the happiest fellow in England!”

“ Ah, indeed! when am I to offer my congratulations?”

“ As soon as you like—the honeymoon’s over.”

“ What!” cried Disbrowe, starting to his feet, “ you don’t mean to say—”

“ My dear fellow, don’t get excited! I do say it—nothing shorter. Lady Austrey awaits your congratulations in London.”

“ And you are really married?”

“ Just so! Miss Norma, Macdonald no longer exists, and from her grave has risen Lady George Austrey—the handsomest peeress in England! Sharp work, my boy, eh?”

“ *Puissez-vous être heureux!*” said Disbrowe, as he

laughingly shook his friend by the hand. "I wish you joy with all my heart. Where were you married?"

"At Rome, at the ambassador's, two months ago."

"And you have come home for good and all, now?"

"Yes, if you call Castle Hill, Inverness, home. We are going there as soon as Lelia leaves England."

"Lelia—who is she?"

Lord George fairly jumped from his seat.

"Why, you old hermit—you anchorite—you St. John of the Desert—you never mean to say you don't know who Lelia is!"

"If you mean the French tragedy queen of that name."

"French! She's no more French than I am; she's English, man alive! Oh, ye gods! it takes away my breath only to think of her. Lelia—the queen—the enchantress—the siren—the Melpomene—the conqueress! Whew! Earnecliffe, I want a glass of ice-water to cool me down after speaking of her—the little devouring flame of fire!"

"Really," said Disbrowe, dryly, "extraordinary transports these for a married man. I have heard—or, rather, read—of this Mademoiselle Lelia; for the papers are full of her. Is she, then, so pretty?"

"Pretty? Earnecliffe, if I had a loaded pistol here, upon my soul I would have it in me to blow your brains out for applying that word to her. Pretty—faugh! She's glorious—maddening—divine! That's what she is! You might as well say a tornado—a sheet of lightning—a storm at sea—was pretty, as Lelia."

"Indeed! Rather a desperate little article she must be. So she has come to England. I thought she had been fifty times offered a small fortune, and refused."

"So she did. She came with us."

"With you?" said Disbrowe, with a stare.

"Yes, with us! She made one of our party. She and Norma are like sisters."

The strangest smile went wandering round Disbrowe's lips, and shone bright in his eyes, when he fixed them on the face of his friend.

"Lelia, the actress, and Lady Austrey!"

"Yes, Lelia, the actress," said Lord George, defiantly.

"Your cold English pride will have no cause to strain itself trying to stoop to her. She is the equal of any woman, peeress or not, in all broad England. I have seen her dancing with archdukes and royal highnesses without number; she has been an honored guest in the home of a duchess. Her life is above reproach, as she likely is above want. It is not necessity makes her play—she has already acquired for herself a fortune; but she has a passion for her art. Oh, Earnecliffe! what a dazzling creature she is! She has flashed like a meteor through Europe, blinding, dazzling, electrifying wherever she went. Nobody knows who or what she is, except—you will wonder when I tell you—Norma!"

"Norma! how came she to know?"

"Well, my dear fellow, that is the strangest part of the business. It was at Florence we saw her first—as Cleopatra, I think, and a glorious queen she made, for whom a thousand heroes might die. Every eye was, of course, bent upon her the moment she appeared: and Norma half rose, and then fell back in her seat. I looked at her, and upon my honor, Earnecliffe, I never was so startled in my life; her face was perfectly colorless, her eyes darkening and dilating, and her lips white and trembling. I spoke to her, but she only grasped my arm and motioned for me to keep still, without ever removing her eyes from the stage. I confess I was puzzled, rather; but I thought it best to bide my time, and let her ladyship have her own way; and faith, she had it, too—for, before Cleopatra had uttered half a dozen words, she gave a low cry, and fell back fainting—stiff, sir, in a dead swoon!"

"Hum-m-m! Very strange, indeed! What then?"

"Why, we brought her home, of course; but as soon as she recovered, she insisted on going back—no persuasion could induce her to remain; and she peremptorily ordered me to give a small note she wrote to the manager of the theater to be delivered to Madame Lelia. Well, sir, he did it; and the next thing was an earnest request from Lelia herself, that Norma would wait in her private dressing-room until after the play."

"And did she?"

"Yes; and a precious long interview they had of it.

Like the 'five minutes' it takes a lady to put on her bonnet, it was over two hours before she made her appearance; and then in such a state of delight; by George! if my Jewish money-lender turned Christian and burned his books, I couldn't get up to such a pitch of rapture."

"Well, what was the result?"

"Why, that Lelia became our traveling companion, or we hers—I don't know which—from that day until we reached Paris. And there, to the great surprise of every one, she accepted an offer from Mr. M——, of —— Theater, to make her *début* in London, and astonish the natives, as I flatter myself she will do, slightly."

"And was our aristocratic friend, Miss Emily Tremain, reconciled to the idea of traveling *en famille* with an actress?"

"Reconciled? I should think so; and very proud and important she felt about it—for where archduchesses smile, it is not for insular aristocracy to sneer. And then Lelia fascinates every one she meets. She is irresistible, my boy; so take care of your heart."

"It stands in no danger. I have a counter-charm, strong enough to protect me even against the all-powerful fascinations of this tragic muse. But this mystery between her and Norma—what does it mean?"

"That is just what I wish you would tell me; for be hanged if I have the least idea. Norma, only laughs and says: 'Wait, the *dénouement* is at hand.'"

"Humph! Rather singular! Is it another act of high treason to ask what this meteor looks like?"

"Well, Norma made me promise to tell you nothing until you would see for yourself."

"Really—"

"Oh, well, after all, what difference does it make, Earnecliffe? It is only a woman's whim, and your curiosity will soon be gratified, for Lelia plays to-night, and, of course, you will be there to worship like the rest of London."

"Can't, my dear fellow; couldn't think of such a thing."

"What! you're not in earnest?" cried Lord Austrey, aghast.



"Never was I more so as I remember."

"Why, you're crazy—downright mad, you know. What's the reason?"

"Well, I have some friends staying here with me, and I can't leave them."

"Bring them with you."

"Humph! Well, of course, if they would like to go, that might do; if not—"

"If not, you go alone. I have said it. Norma commanded me, under pain of her eternal displeasure, and half a score of the severest sort of curtain-lectures, to bring you along; so, will ye, nill ye, come you must. Not a word. I won't take any excuses; so don't go to the trouble of making them."

"Oh, but positively, you know—"

"Oh, but positively I know I won't! Who are those friends of yours?"

"My uncle, Mr. De Vere; my cousin, Miss De Vere; and that little girl you saw, from America."

"Well, bring them along, of course. They want to see Lelia, too—supposing they are not barbarians, like you. Come, you will just have time to dress and be at Mrs. Tremain's in time for dinner."

"Well, there is no resisting you, I see. Make yourself at home, while I go and consult my respected uncle on the subject."

"All right! only hurry up—there is no time to spare. I wouldn't miss seeing Lelia play 'Jeanne D'Arc' to-night for 'The Crown Diamonds!' Tell the old gentleman, with my respects, that I won't take 'No' for an answer, at any price."

Disbrowe laughed, and sauntered out, and, after a brief period, returned with his uncle, to whom he presented Lord George, with due decorum.

"You have met with better success than you deserve, my Lord Austrey," he said; "for my cousin not only consents to go, but is dressing even now; and my uncle is quite delighted at the prospect of seeing Lelia, whose fame has reached from Dan to Beersheba, yea, even unto the far and facetious regions of New Jersey. I have ordered my 'coach and six,' and nothing remains but to make a few

alterations in my outer man. So, for a few moments, *au revoir!* ”

Half an hour after saw them *en route*, dashing along behind two splendid grays. The whole subject of conversation was “Lelia,” as Lord George related anecdote after anecdote of her—her kindness to the poor—her princely donations to churches and charitable institutions—her fierce, indomitable pride, that made her legions of admirers keep a long distance off—her haughty independence, that made the friendship of the high and titled no act of condescension, but a simple courtesy to an equal—her free, frank, impulsive ways—her splendid acting; in short, Lelia—Lelia was the theme until the carriage drew up in front of the Tremain mansion.

Lord George had insisted, on their all coming with him, and Disbrowe had half-reluctantly complied. There was a quick flutter of his pulses at the thought of meeting Norma again, and a hot glow in his face as he recalled their last parting. How would she meet him? How could he congratulate her, and before so many too? He half regretted he had come at all; but it was too late to draw back or regret now. Lord George, with Augusta on his arm, was already in the drawing-room, where Norma, Mrs. Tremain, and her daughter sat. There was an introduction, bows and smiles, and friendly words of welcome from the lady of the house and her daughter; and Disbrowe found himself holding Norma’s hand in his, and wishing her joy, completely himself—his easy, self-possessed self-again.

She had met him so frankly and freely, looked in his eyes with a smile so bright and happy, laid her hand in his so promptly, that all his confusion passed away. She started violently as she saw who accompanied him, and turned upon him a look of eager inquiry.

“My American relatives,” he said, in a low tone, surprised by her strange, questioning look.

As Lord George introduced her to Mr. De Vere and his daughter, she bowed, while the blood mounted to her temple. Very strange, thought Disbrowe, lost in wonder at this school-girl blush of the calm, graceful, high-bred lady.

Something about Lady Austrey seemed to strike Mr. De Vere; for he fixed his eyes on her face with a look at once so puzzled, so searching, and so full of a strange recognition, that as she looked up, and caught his involuntary stare, she crimsoned again, and half-turned away.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. De Vere, hastily, becoming conscious of his rudeness; "but, really, your ladyship's face struck me as being so familiar. Alfred, does Lady Austrey remind you of any one you ever saw before?"

"Yes, sir. I have often thought she strikingly resembled that Spanish boy, Jacinto."

"The very one! The likeness is most extraordinary, and the expression is the same exactly!"

Norma tried to laugh; but her face was scarlet.

"Who was Jacinto, may I ask?" said Lord George.

"A young Spaniard I met in New Jersey. He might have been Lady Austrey's twin brother—he looked so like her."

The dinner-bell here fortunately put an end to a subject evidently anything but welcome to the lady in question, and it was not again renewed. Disbrowe sat beside her at dinner; but all his efforts could not make her disclose anything that would throw a light on the subject of her intimacy with Lelia, the actress.

"Is she handsome?" he asked.

"Perilously handsome."

"And ladylike?"

"Extremely ladylike."

"Does she remain long in England?"

"That depends—yes, I think she will. Would you like her to do so?"

"Me! Why, what possible interest can it have for me!"

She looked up with the queerest smile, but said nothing.

"Do you suppose I will fall in love with her?" he could not help asking, provoked by her smile.

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"I had rather be excused. Stage-players are not in my

line. I could not love an actress, if she were a very goddess for beauty—a Venus herself.”

“*Prenez garde, monsieur!* do not be too sure. You can do as you please, however. Most certainly neither I nor Lelia will ask you to do so.”

“Has she many lovers?”

“Legions.”

“Wealthy and titled?”

“Yes, my lord. She refused the hand of his highness the Duke of B——, at Villetre, so I do not believe she would die of ecstasy if my Lord of Earnecliffe offered her his hand, heart, and name to-morrow!”

Her sarcastic tone silenced Disbrowe on that subject; but all he had heard piqued his curiosity to see this strange actress—this eighth wonder of the world; and it was in a sort of fever of impatience that he took his seat in the carriage on their way to the theater.

It was crowded when they entered—a perfect jam from pit to ceiling. It was a brilliant scene—fans waving, jewels flashing, bright eyes sparkling, smiles wreathing rosy lips, and a dreamy odor of perfume all around. The highest, the noblest of the proud English *noblesse* were there, and all waiting breathlessly for the curtain to go up. A bell tinkled—the music ceased—a dead hush followed—the curtain slowly rose, furred to the ceiling, and there stood the brave “Maid of Orleans”—the heroic daughter of France, its banner in her hand, at the head of its army—there before them stood “Lelia, the Actress!”

A wild cheer arose—an English cheer—swelling, and rising, and thundering, till the very wall shook a regal welcome truly to the tragic queen. She advanced a step, bowed, and smiled with a queenly grace, and waving her hand for silence, uttered a few brief, graceful words of thanks.

Another cheer answered her; and then the vast crowd sunk back in silence to listen.

All but the inmates of one box! Lord Earnecliffe was on his feet, and so was Mr. De Vere, both deadly pale. Were they dreaming? Were they mad? Jacquetta stood before them!—dead no longer, but living, smiling, radiant—the same Jacquetta they loved so well. Neither



could speak ; they stood watching her spellbound, until her voice first broke the silence. That voice ! There never was but one such voice in the world !

And from the lips of both, at the same moment, broke a wild cry of "Jacquetta !"

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE ACTRESS AND THE EARL.

"Do not spurn me in my prayer,  
For this wand'ring ever longer, evermore,  
Hath overworn me ;  
And I know not on what shore  
I may rest from my despair."

E. H. BROWNING

THAT cry drew every eye to their box, and an angry murmur of "Shame !" ran through the house at the interruption. But heedless of all—of everything save the actress before them, Mr. De Vere and Lord Earnecliffe stood still, gazing upon her with eyes wild with surprise, not unmixed with a sort of horror at this apparition from the dead. Augusta, too, had seen her, and sunk back with a low cry, while Orrie leaned over the box with the loud exclamation :

"Oh, grandpa ! it's Miss Jack ! it's Miss Jack !"

For one moment, the clear, bright, penetrating eyes of Lelia, the actress, were raised—those dark, clear eyes Disbrowe knew so well ; but there was no recognition in their depths, and, dropping them again, she went on with her *rôle*.

All eyes were still bent on their box in surprise and curiosity, to the great annoyance of Mrs. Tremain and her daughter, who were lost in wonder at this singular scene. Lord George, too, stared with all his eyes, evidently debating within himself whether he had not secured a party of lunatics that day from Disbrowe Park. Norma was the only one of the party who seemed to understand it ; and there was a malicious smile sparkling in her eyes and hovering around her lips, only partially concealed by the fan she held before her face.

"I say, Earnecliffe, old fellow, this won't do, you know," said Lord George, in a low voice touching his arm; "everybody's looking at you. Sit down, won't you?"

"By Heaven! it is her herself," cried Disbrowe, passionately. "Living or dead, it is Jacquetta!"

"My lord, sit down, I beseech you! Mr. De Vere, my dear sir, *pray* sit down," entreated Mrs. Tremain.

Mr. De Vere sunk back with a groan.

"Oh, my God! can the grave give up its dead?"

"Eh? What?" cried Lord George. "What is he talking about? The old gent's mad, Norma; mad as a march hare."

"You may find there is method in his madness. Lord Earnecliffe, do be seated; you are disturbing the audience."

Disbrowe passed his hands across his eyes, as if to dispel a mist; and then seizing his hat, turned to go.

"My lord, where are you going?" said Lord George, startled by his wild looks.

"To Jacquetta! Living or dead, she is mine, and I claim her! Let me go."

He broke from him, mingled with the crowd, and disappeared. The face of sublime bewilderment and dismay which Lord George turned to his wife, at any other time would have thrown her into convulsions of laughter; but now some nervous feeling of anxiety for Disbrowe restrained all inclination for mirth.

"You had better follow him, George. *Do* go after him," she cried, anxiously.

"Follow him! Why, where the dev—I beg your pardon, Lady Austrey; but upon my soul, this is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of! Now, what do you suppose has got into that good youth, and this nice old American here, to set them flaring up in this fashion at sight of Lelia? Where is he gone?"

"To the green-room. Oh, George! do go after him; you have the *entrée*—have you not?"

"Yes; but what am I to do when I get there?"

"Oh, anything—nothing—I don't know. I wish you would go, anyway. Do go, George."

"Most decidedly I'll go, my love. I hope I know my

duty as a married man too well to refuse you anything. And as this overwhelming mystery is not to be explained, I presume I must trust to my own native genius and ingenuity for finding it out. *Au revoir*. I'm off."

And opening the door, he disappeared among the crowd, leaving Mrs. Tremain and her daughter completely at their wits' end.

Passing hastily through the crowd, Lord George wended his way to the green-room by a side-door; and, on entering, saw his friend in violent altercation with the manager. Lord Earnecliffe was passionately excited, his face deadly pale, his eyes wild and fierce, and his whole appearance so completely changed from the languid, indolent being he had seemed scarce an hour before, that it is no wonder Lord George stood for a moment undecided whether it was his friend or somebody else.

"I say, Earnecliffe, what the foul fiend are you raising such a row for? Mr. Maxwell, what's up?"

"Your friend, my lord, insists on seeing Lelia; and it is contrary to her express command to admit any one. I am really very sorry; but I assure you, it is quite impossible," said the manager, bowing deprecatingly.

With a fierce exclamation of angry impatience, Disbrowe turned to Lord Austrey.

"I tell you, sir, I will see her, in spite of all the managers from here to the Antipodes. I *must* see her, or I shall go mad!"

"Faith, I think you are that already! What, in the name of all that's absurd, has come to you, Earnecliffe? What do you want to see Lelia for?"

"I know no Lelia! I came to see Jacquetta De Vere; and see her I will, in spite of earth and Hades!"

"Who the demon is she? Oh, the man is mad—that's flat! Maxwell, you know I am a personal friend of Lelia's, and privileged to see her at any time. Will you tell her I wish to see her now?"

"Certainly, my lord, I have no doubt she will see *you*," said the manager, hastening off.

"Now, Earnecliffe, what *is* the matter? What in the world has come over you all of a sudden?"

"I cannot tell you—I cannot tell whether I am sane

or mad. Do not ask me, for I cannot talk to you now. A desperate gesture, as he strode up and down, spoke more than words.

Lord George looked at him, and indulged in a long, wailing whistle, that plainly spoke his conviction that his unhappy young friend's brain (if he ever possessed such a thing,) was completely turned. At the same moment the manager appeared.

"My lord," he said, turning to Lord George, "Lelia has just left the stage; and as she does not appear in the next scene, she will see your lordship now. Will you please to step this way?"

Disbrowe started up to accompany him, but Lord George interposed.

"Not now, my dear fellow! Wait until I return; and if my eloquence has any effect on Lelia, she will see you."

He followed the manager as he spoke; and Disbrowe was left pacing up and down, with a burning heart and a whirling brain, still striving to persuade himself this was all the wild delirium of a dream. Jacquetta alive and well! Oh, he must certainly be mad!

The return of Lord Austrey aroused him, and he looked at him with eyes full of devouring impatience.

"Well?"

"Well, I have seen her, and she will see you after the play; so rein in that mad impatience of yours until then. How you are going to apologize for intruding upon her, I don't know. She smiled when I told her the state of mind her appearance had thrown you into."

Disbrowe still strode up and down, like one possessed. Lord George threw himself into a chair and looked at him.

"My dear fellow, what a treasure you must be to your bootmaker, if you are in the habit of taking such severe turns as this! 'Pon my honor! I would give all the spare change I have about me, to know what has come to you so suddenly. Won't you go back to the theater and see the play played out?"

"No—it would drive me mad to look at her there again!" exclaimed Disbrowe, vehemently.



Lord George stared and indulged himself in a low, hysterical whistle.

An hour and a half dragged on their endless length before the drama was ended. Disbrowe had wrought himself up to a perfect fever of impatience when the manager approached them and announced the coming of Lelia.

And even as he spoke, she stood beside them, looking at Disbrowe with her large, calm eyes. Those eyes! what a spell they cast over him, calming down his mad fever of impatience like ice cast on fire! Those clear, bright, penetrating eyes, with their unfathomable depth of mockery, how well he knew them! Those short, bright, clustering curls—that round, white, boyish brow—those sweet, beautiful lips, that small, graceful form, how well—how well—he knew them all! It seemed but yesterday since he had bidden her farewell in the parlor of Fontelle Hall—forever, as he thought; and now they stood face to face again!

“Jacquetta! Jacquetta!” he passionately cried, “have we met again?”

She glanced at him with her calm eyes, and drew back in haughty surprise.

“My lord, what does this mean?” she said, turning no Lord Austrey.

“Are you mad, Earnecliffe? What the foul fiend do you mean with your ‘Jacquetta’?” said Lord Austrey, in a fierce whisper. Then aloud: “Madam, will you excuse my friend? Unless he has suddenly gone crazy, I do not know how to account for this. Allow me to present him: Lord Earnecliffe, Madame Lelia.”

She bowed; and the faintest, strangest smile went wandering around her lips. That smile! had he not seen it a thousand times before? He passed his hand across his brow, like one bewildered.

“Am I sane or mad? Can the dead have risen again? Madam, for heaven’s sake! answer me, before I go wild—were you ever called Jacquetta?”

She came over, and held out her hand, with the old, bright, half-mocking smile.

“Yes! And so cousin Alfred has not forgotten Jack De Vere?”

He took her hand and tried to speak, but a sudden faintness came over him, and, deadly pale, he sunk mute and voiceless into a chair.

"My lord, he is fainting!" she cried, in alarm.

He made a faint motion with his hand.

"No—it is nothing. A glass of water—quick!"

She caught it from the manager's hand, and held it to his lips. He drank it off, and catching both her hands in his, looked up in the bright, beautiful, smiling face, with such a strange, troubled, yearning gaze!

"Well, my lord, you will know me the next time, that is certain. Had you not better let go my hands?"

"Oh, Jacquetta! Jacquetta! is this really you?"

"Well, I am rather inclined to think so. Do I not look substantial enough?"

And she laughed as she released her hands.

"Oh, Jacquetta! I thought you were dead!"

A dark shadow passed over her face, a strong shiver passed through her frame, and she turned away with a passionate gesture.

"Oh, that dreadful death-sleep! that terrible vault! that awful awakening! God grant I could forget it!"

She put her hands over her face for a moment, and then dropped them—calm once more. He started to his feet, a new light dawning upon him.

"Then you were not dead—only in a trance? Jacquetta! Jacquetta! was it so?"

"Even so, my lord."

"And then—good heavens! you were buried alive?"

"Yes," she said, with another strong shudder.

"Great Heavens! And how were you saved from your awful fate, Jacquetta?"

"God lives!" she said, looking up reverently. "And the same power that once saved Daniel in the lion's den, Jonah from the depths of the sea, saved Jacquetta from her living tomb."

"But how—who—Mr. De Vere did not know?"

"No; but what can it matter to you, lord earl?"

The old look of cold hauteur passed over her face, and she turned away with a small, impatient motion.

"Oh, Jacquetta!" he reproachfully cried.

"Well, my lord."

"My lord! This from *you*? It was Alfred, once, Jacquetta."

"That time has passed, my Lord Earnecliffe; and you had better forget it ever existed. It is not fraught with such pleasant reminiscences for either of us."

"Forget it? Never, while life remains! Oh, Jacquetta! you are free now; may I not hope—"

"Lord earl, you forget yourself!" she imperiously cried. "Hope for nothing from me! Jack De Vere is Jack De Vere still!"

"Thank heaven for that! Look on this, Jacquetta, and see if you know it yet."

He drew out a locket set with diamonds, and opened it, disclosed a small piece of paper on which a few faint pencil-marks still lingered. She took it; and up over her neck, face, and brow flushed a hot, crimson tide.

"My lord! my lord!" she cried, in a choking voice, "I have not deserved this! I was insane when that was written."

"Then, let me hope you are insane still. Oh, Jacquetta! my life! my love! my hope! do not retract what you once wrote here. Tell me you love me still!"

"Lord Earnecliffe, do you dare to speak thus to me? Do you forget the secret of that lonely room in old Fontelle?"

"Then, you do not know? Oh, Jacquetta! he is dead!"

"Dead!" she cried with a start, turning first red and then ashen white. "Oh, Alfred! I never heard this."

"He has been dead nearly a year now. You are free—free as air, Jacquetta! My heart, my hand, my fortune—my very life, lies at your feet. Oh, Jacquetta! speak, and tell me I may live."

She looked at him with a strange glance, and her cold look softened a little as she saw his eager, wild, passionate gaze.

"Then you have not forgotten Jacquetta yet, my lord?"

"Forget you! Oh, Jacquetta! sleeping or waking, night or day, you have never for one instant been forgotten."

"You are blessed with a good memory, Lord Earne-

cliffe; and yet there is one little circumstance you have ceased to remember for a moment. Allow me to remind you; you are a belted earl, and I am—Lelia, the actress!”

That drawing up of the small delicate figure—that proud lift of the head—that clear, bright flash of the dark eyes—that scornful curl of the shut upper lip—what a world of pride they betrayed!

“Neither you nor I care for that one straw—one whit! Wealth and rank are but a name, and mockery when put in competition with our love. You are not Lelia, the actress, to me; you are Jacquetta—my Jacquetta—my liege lady—my darling—the one love of my life! Oh, Jacquetta!”

“Softly—softly, my dear lord. What a gale you do get into for a trifle!” (And the provoking smile of other days broke over her pretty face.) “Let us talk this small matter over calmly, sensibly, and leave out all transports for the present. There are more heads to this indictment than one. I am Captain Nick Tempest’s daughter!”

Disbrowe was provoked by this off-hand way of doing business, and exclaimed imperiously:

“What the deuce do I care! I don’t want to marry Captain Nick Tempest! Oh, Jacquetta!”

“There you are at it again! How often have you said *that* during the last ten minutes? So you are willing to forget everything but—”

“But that I love you more than life. Jacquetta—Jacquetta! you are torturing me. Speak, and tell me—am I to live or die?”

She looked in his eyes—in his flushed, eager, impassioned face, so bright and beautiful in its fervent pleading—and she read there the strong, undying love that was to bless her whole life. A soft, tender smile came to her lips, something like a tear to her eye, and, laying her small, white hand in his, she said, brightly:

“Live, my lord! Forever and ever Jacquetta is yours!”

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Well, good reader, are you on the *qui vive* for what came after that? If you are, and expect a glowing description of Lord Earnecliffe’s transports, I am sorry



to disappoint you. The fact is, it is very tantalizing either reading or writing of such things—something like being hungry, and looking in a pastry-cook's window when you have no money in your pocket. Just imagine, my dear gentleman friend, how you felt when "your own Mary Ann" said something similar, and multiply that by a thousand-fold, and you will have a pretty good idea of how Lord Earnecliffe felt at that moment. It was one of those brief, blissful instants of unmitigated sunshine that shine on us so rarely—more's the pity—in this life; and two of the wanderers in this vale of tears were, for the time being, perfectly and completely happy.

But Lord Austrey! What words can paint the astonishment, amazement, not to say horror, of that young Briton at hearing and seeing all this! The whole English language would have been inadequate to the task of expressing his feelings. So, thrusting his hands into his pockets, he began whistling, with the most piercing emphasis, "God save the King."

Jacquetta looked at him and laughed.

"You think us crazy—do you not, my lord?"

"Well, really," said Lord George, politely, "I am not prepared to say exactly that you are; but my private conviction is, that some one of us three is an idiot. Which one it is, I am not at liberty to say."

"Come, George, my dear old fellow," exclaimed Disbrowe, laying a hand on either shoulder, "wish me joy! I am the happiest fellow in the whole world!"

"Oh, are you? Well, of course, you ought to know best; but I'll be hanged if I can make head or tail of this whole matter!"

"All in good time, my boy! Jacquetta, will you not come with us to-night? Augusta, and Orrie, and Mr. De Vere are here."

"I know—I saw them. No, not to-night, Alfred. I have given you my address; come, the whole of you, to-morrow. I am not quite calm enough to see them to-night. Oh, Alfred! it all seems like a dream to me yet!"

"Thank Heaven, it is a reality! But, first, Jacquetta, will you not tell me how you were saved?"

"Simply enough. My father—Captain Nick Tempest—saved my life."

"He! How?"

"It appears he was at Green Creek when I was removed; and upon his return was furious to find what Mr. De Vere had done. At first, he was for going to Fontelle, and making a scene with Mr. De Vere; but Grizzle prevailed upon him to take a more prudent course, and substitute cunning for violence. He came to Fontelle that night, saw old Tribulation—poor Aubrey's nurse—and, through her means, obtained the key of the vault, entered, and found me—alive!"

"Heavens! what a situation for you!"

"I had scarcely time to realize my situation; for I had just awakened from my deathlike sleep—my trance, or whatever you may call it; and Captain Tempest, who can be cool and self-possessed in a crisis, made no to-do about it, but carried me off, got me on board the 'Fly-by-Night,' where, by the aid of his surgeon, before morning Jacquetta was herself again!"

"How strange and terrible! I have often heard of such deadly sleeps before. Good heavens! if he had not come, what a fate might have been yours!"

"We will not think of it. Heaven was merciful. Do you know, that all the time I lay there for dead, I heard and understood everything that passed? I knew you watched by my side all that long, sad night—I knew they were going to bury me; but I could not utter a word, nor make the faintest motion. Life was suspended, seemingly; yet, oh! how vividly it all comes back to me now! I suffered an age of agony in those few hours."

"My poor Jacquetta! my own darling! To think there should have been such a strange destiny keeping us apart in this way! Truly, this world is full of paper walls!"

"We have broken them down at last. Jacquetta and Alfred stand on equal terms now—do they not?" she said, with a smile.

"Heaven be praised—yes! But, tell me, how came you to seek the stage?"

"It was my destiny, I suppose. I was made to be an

actress, and not a countess. However, I suppose I must submit. Captain Tempest—I cannot call him father, somehow—and I came to understand each other pretty well before our journey's end. Alfred, they say the demon is not so black as he is painted; and I found Captain Tempest anything but the ferocious monster he was represented. He saw we could not get on together, and he agreed to let me go through the world my own way. So we parted—he for Cuba, and I for France; and since then we have never met. I took my own name, and was successful, as you know. I met Lady Austrey abroad, and came with her to England."

"And that reminds me! How in the world came you and Norma ever to know each other?"

She laughed, and her eyes sparkled.

"What great stupid things these lords of creation are. So you really cannot suspect?"

"Upon my honor I cannot."

"Then I shall not tell you—perhaps Norma may some day. But tell me, Alfred, how is Augusta? I saw her in your box, looking like a living skeleton."

"Yes; she is dead in life."

"My poor, poor sister. Have they discovered the source of this mysterious sorrow of hers yet?"

"I have; she told me in confidence, and I believe it has no real foundation whatever; yet you see it is wearing away her life. What a pity we cannot all be happy in this world—as happy as I am."

"I don't know as you have any great cause for happiness after all. I am not much of a treasure for any one. But now you positively must go, Alfred; and listen; bring Orrie with you when you come to-morrow. I wonder if Mr. De Vere will give her to me now?"

"He shall. The Countess of Earnecliffe shall claim her own child. She knew you the moment she saw you, Jacquetta."

"I am glad!—I am glad! Oh, Alfred! how my heart has yearned for that child—almost as much, "she said with a smile, half sad, half gay, "as it has for somebody else. And now, Lord Austrey, good-night; remember me to her ladyship, and tell her *her prophecy has come true.*"

"What was that?" said Disbrowe, curiously.

"Never mind. I will tell you some day. Good-night, Alfred—good-night, my lord."

She turned to go. Disbrowe took a step after her.

"Not with this cold parting, surely, Jacquetta?"

"Keep the feast till the feast day," laughed Jacquetta. And with a wave of her hand and a bright, saucy glance, she was gone.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### AN OLD FOE.

"Who comes from the bridal chamber?"

'Tis Azrael, the angel of death."—SHALABA.

It was a happy scene on which the glad sunshine streamed the next morning, as it came in long, slanting beams between the folds of the damask curtains, and irradiated the beaming faces on which it fell.

They were in Jacquetta's parlor at the hotel—Mr. De Vere, Augusta, Orrie and Disbrowe. Jacquetta herself bewitching in a morning-dress of blue silk, sat on a low ottoman at Mr. De Vere's side, one hand clasped in his, the other arm encircling little Orrie. It seemed like old times to be all together again, and the sad, lonely years that had intervened since they parted last, were like a dark, vague dream. Jacquetta sat, bright, radiant, entrancing as a little sunbeam; her piquant little face flushed, sparkling with her new-found happiness. Mr. De Vere's face wore a look of quiet delight, mixed with a sort of chronic remorse for the past; and little Orrie stood gazing on her new-found mamma, with a mingled expression of pleasure and doubt. Even Augusta's sad, wan face was lit up with a faint glow of pleasure, and her large, melancholy dark eyes lingered long and fondly on the bright face of her long-lost sister.

But Disbrowe—who shall paint the state of beatitude he was in—the profound joy, too deep and intense for words? Ah! cynics may scoff; but, after all, the brightest moment of our life is when we know we love and are loved again. It brings the most perfect joy this world



has to give. I don't say it will last ; and you know the pithy Scotch proverb : " A kiss and a drink of water make but a poor breakfast ; " but, after all, the kiss is very delicious for the time being ; and though one would not live on sweets always, they are very delightful things, indeed, in their way, and much more pleasant at the moment than the hard brown bread of every-day life. So Lord Earnecliffe—poor, faithful fellow—felt repaid a thousand-fold for all he had endured and suffered for her sake ; and as the heart best knoweth its own bitterness, he had suffered, too. To think that she was his at last, his own—this fierce, tameless spirit, half-mortal, half-changeling, but wholly bewitching—to think that he was to place a coronet on that graceful head—to call her wife, to—oh ! it was too much bliss ! and it would have required an iceberg applied to either temple to cool the fever in his blood at the thought.

" Strange, strange—most strange ! " murmured Mr. De Vere, as he listened to Jacquetta repeating the story Disbrowe had told him the night before. Oh, Jacquetta ! what an escape you have had. What an awful fate might have been yours—to be buried alive, the most dreadful of all dooms ! What a debt of gratitude we all owe to Captain Tempest at last ! "

" He was very kind to me ; and I owe him more than I can ever repay ; but to live on wealth obtained as his had been, I could not ; and so we parted. "

" I wonder he let you go, " said Mr. De Vere. " He seemed bent on obtaining you that day—that terrible day. I will never forget. "

" Do not think of it, sir. No ; strange to say, he made no objection to my resolution. I believe he loved me in a sort of a way—that is, he did not care two pins for Jacquetta De Vere ; but he still fondly cherished the memory of his lost Lelia. And seeing how desperately in earnest I was, he did not oppose me. And so we parted in Havre : he to go to Cuba, and I to go to Paris, under the name of Madame Lelia, and make my first appearance on the stage. "

" What a strange life yours has been, Jacquetta !—a real romance in real life. What a brave, strong heart

you must have, my dear child, to endure so much and make no sign! And all through me! Oh, Jacquetta, how, *how* can you ever forgive me?"

"Very easily, sir. You do not think me such a vindictive little monster, I hope."

"But you have been so cruelly wronged; so deeply injured—deprived of a name, of a home, of friends, of a child, of a father, all in one day. Oh, Jacquetta! you may forgive me; but I can never forgive myself."

"Dear papa," she said, calling him for the first time by the old familiar name, "why will you rake over the ashes of a fire that went out long ago. Let the dead past bury its dead, and remember nothing but that I am the happiest woman in all England to-day."

She looked at Disbrowe with a smile; and her bright eyes were full of love and trust.

"After a storm there cometh a calm, and after tears and weeping He poureth in joyfulness!" murmured Mr. De Vere. "Heaven be praised for that! And now, Jacquetta, will you ever go back to America?"

She laughed a little, glad laugh.

"You forget Jacquetta is not to be her own mistress much longer—more's the pity. You must consult my future lord and master about that, as I will have to bow to his superior judgment, I suppose."

"Your future lord and master is ready to obey his liege lady's slightest wish. Do what you like, go where you like, and you will please me—even should it be to the remotest corner of Kamschatka!"

"How charming! What a model husband you will make, my lord! What do you wager you are not ready to give me a good shaking before a month, now?"

"It would not be the first time I have felt like it, you little torment! Nevertheless, we will go back to America whenever you please, and buy the whole State of New Jersey for a country seat, if you say so."

"Thank you! How very generous you are! Dear—dear old Fontelle—how glad I shall be to see it again! Won't you, Orrie?"

"Y-e-s," said Orrie, meditatively. "I guess so, if

grandpa don't send me back to school. I'd a great deal rather go with Frank!" and be a middy."

"Poor—dear Frank laughed Jacquetta, "he was such a stanch friend and admirer of mine always. I wish you had brought him with you to England, papa."

"I couldn't, my dear. You will see him, though, when Alfred takes you back. And, *à propos*, when are you to be transformed into Lady Earnecliffe, Jack?"

Jacquetta blushed, but before she could speak, Disbrowe began beseechingly:

"Do intercede for me, sir!—where is the use of waiting? I have been urging her to name some day next week, but she is not to be persuaded. If you will only try your influence, you may prevail on her. Augusta—Orrie—do persuade her to listen to reason!"

"Reason! Now, my lord, I think it is most unreasonable—next month will be quite time enough."

Disbrowe's gesture of despair at such an announcement made Mr. De Vere smile; and, turning to the wilful beauty, he began, coaxingly:

"Nonsense, Jacquetta!—don't be absurd! I can't see why you should object to next week, if the settlements can be got ready in that time—eh, Earnecliffe?"

"Of course not, sir! There is no possible reason why she should do so; and, as for the settlements, I'll pledge you my word they will be all right. Come, Jacquetta, do consent and make me happy at once."

"Happy. He calls that happiness!" said Jacquetta, *sotto voce*. "Why, papa, such haste is perfectly barbarous!—no one ever heard of such a thing! Why, when a man is going to be hanged they give him three or four weeks to prepare; and I don't see why you should be less merciful than the grim old judge!"

"Now, Miss Jack—I mean mamma—don't," said Orrie, looking sympathizingly at Disbrowe. "Don't you see you are making him feel bad? Why can't you do what he wants—I'm sure *I* would."

"Bravo, Orrie!" said Mr. De Vere, laughing.

"Would you, really, Orrie?" said Jacquetta. "Will you come and live with us if I do?"

"I guess I will," said Orrie, with sparkling eyes, "if grandpa lets me! May I, grandpa?"

"Decidedly, my dear! Come, prevail on mamma to name some day next week!"

"Now, mamma, do!—why can't you? Just see how solemn he looks. I'm sure he would do as much for you, if you asked him. Aunt 'Gusty, coax mamma?"

"My dear Jacquetta, let me prevail on you to make Alfred happy," said Augusta, with one of her faint cold smiles. "Life is too short to be spent in waiting."

"Oh, Jacquetta! be reasonable!—do, for once in your life! Let it be next Thursday," pleaded Disbrowe.

Jacquetta laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, be it so—a wilful man must have his way; but if you repent before the honeymoon is over, don't say it was my fault."

"Repent! Ah, my darling! you know I will never do that!"

"Indeed, I don't! Think of Socrates! How do you know but I will turn out a second Xantippe on your hands? I consent, but on one condition."

"What is that? Name it, and it shall be fulfilled, though it were half my kingdom."

"Ah! that sounds very fine; but I know the proverb: 'Good promisers are bad performers.' However, we will see. Our marriage must be strictly private. I will have no pomp, or fuss, or parade. If I am to be a countess, I will put off my greatness as long as possible. And, secondly, instead of going to the continent after the ceremony, you will take me to America. I want to see the land of my birth and the home of my childhood once more."

"It shall be done on the honor of an earl. Have you any further commands for your slave?"

"No—yes; I want to see Norma—I mean Lady Austrey—this morning. So, though it is yet unfashionably early, I will take the privilege of a friend, and dress immediately for the visit."

"By the way, Jacquetta," said Disbrowe, as she arose to go, "when am I to learn the mystery of this strange intimacy between you and Norma? Austrey told me his wife fainted, or something, the moment she saw you."



"My dear sir, is it such a very unusual thing for a lady to faint suddenly, that I am to be brought to task for it? Lady Austrey might faint a thousand times, and Jacquetta have nothing to do with it."

"True! But when Lady Austrey immediately gets into a state of mind, and insists on seeing Jacquetta, surely that lady has something to do with it, then."

"Ah! you are dying to know, I see; but I shan't tell you—at least till Norma gives me leave. So, for ten minutes, *au revoir*." And the bright little vision was gone.

Half an hour later, the whole party drew up before the stately portal of Tremain House, and were ushered into the drawing-room, where they found Norma alone.

"My dearest Norma!"

"My dear—dear Jacquetta!" And the two friends were clasped in each other's arms.

"So, my lord, the wanderer is found," said Lady Austrey, when the first greetings were over, turning, with a smile, to Disbrowe.

"Yes; and, if I do not mistake greatly, we have to thank your ladyship for it."

She laughed.

"How is this, Madame Lelia? Have you been telling?"

"Not I—though it was not for want of coaxing, I can assure you."

"No; we have been lavishing entreaties on her which, if she had not a heart as hard as the nether millstone, she could not resist. Will Lady Austrey be more merciful, and explain the mystery?"

She blushed and looked at Jacquetta.

"Shall I tell him?"

"Just as you like. He will die of a rush of curiosity to the brain, if you don't."

As she spoke the door opened, and Mrs. Tremain and her daughter entered. Cordial greetings were interchanged; and, finding the rest were in the midst of an animated conversation, Norma beckoned to Disbrowe and made room for him beside her.

"So you would like to know how Jacquetta and I came to know each other?"

"Really I must plead guilty, I fear. You knew her before you met in Italy?"

"Yes—let me see—nearly a year before."

"Why—how?"

"Well, you needn't exclaim in that way, and draw attention—it is simple enough when you come to understand it."

"But, my dear madam, a year before, she was in America!"

"I know it! So was I!"

"What!"

"Why, how thunderstruck you look! Is my visiting that country as well as other people, such an unheard-of thing?"

"But really—why, my dear Norma, I never heard you were there," he cried, completely astounded.

"Very likely—yet I was there, nevertheless. How is Captain Tempest, and my friend, Grizzle Howlet, and Mr. Rowlie, of the Mermaid Inn?"

She half laughed, yet there was an unusual flush on her pearly face. Disbrowe sat mute with amazement.

"Dumb, I see! By the way, my lord, have you heard of your Spanish friend, Jacinto, lately?"

A light broke upon him! With a half-repressed cry he nearly sprung from his seat.

"Good heavens! were you—could you—? Oh, Norma, was it you!"

She was crimson to the temples, yet she met his startled eyes firmly, and said, "*Yes!*"

"And I never knew it—never suspected it. Norma—Norma! what an idiot I have been!"

"Hard words, my lord; but, of course, you know best."

"And you were—you followed me there! Did Jacquetta know it, Norma?"

"Yes; her keen eyes discovered me at once; and I told her all. Do you understand, now, the scene in my room?"

"Oh! everything is as clear as day now! Good Heaven! how I should have been so blind! Does your father know, Norma?"

"No; no one knows but you and Jacquetta; I ought to have told George, I suppose; but really I felt ashamed to tell him I had made such a fool of myself. 'Where ignorance is bliss,' you know, 'tis folly to be wise.' Perhaps, also, you understand the mystery of the painting now, too?"

"Oh, everything is as clear as noonday; but this is so strange I can scarcely believe I am not dreaming!"

"Think it a dream, if you like. I wish it was. But, my lord, don't flatter yourself too much. You know how intensely romantic I always was, and it was quite as much for the sake of the adventure, as for the sake of Captain Disbrowe, that I went. It had haunted my imagination for years, an escapade like that; and when the opportunity offered, I seized it. Papa was abroad on the continent, and would not return until you did; so it was easy enough feigning a trip to Scotland, and going to America instead. You remember my disguise, my dyed hair, and walnut-barked complexion, and how completely it changed me, when you failed to recognize me? At Southampton, I think it was—I first met Captain Tempest; and finding he was to sail the next day, took passage with him to America. A few days after my arrival, we met; Jacquetta discovered my secret; I told her my history; and though she blamed me for my wild freak, yet she consented to keep my secret. And so—*finis!*"

He smiled, and looked at her with a strange glance. She met it with one half-scornful, half-shy.

"No, my lord; have no doubts on the subject. I have completely got over my school-girl *penchant* for the dashing guardsman. I love my husband with my whole heart, and him alone. When am I to congratulate Lady Earnecliffe, my lord?"

"Next week," he answered, his eyes filling with love and pride, as they rested on Jacquetta.

"Ah, I am glad! Dear Jacquetta, how happy she will be!"

"I hope so—I trust so. If the devotion of a life can make her so, she will be indeed."

Some other visitors were announced as he spoke, and our party arose to go.

Mr. De Vere had promised to take Orrie somewhere. So they set off on foot, while Augusta and Jacquetta entered the earl's brougham to be driven home. As they drove on, laughing and chatting gayly, their attention was arrested by a mob that had gathered round a drunken woman in the street. A sudden cheer arose, as they approached; and the horses, only half-tamed things at best, saw fit to take fright; and the instant after, were dashing along like mad. Disbrowe strove to check their mad career, but in vain; and they flew like lightning on in the direction of Westminster Bridge, threatening every moment to dash the carriage to pieces. People cleared the road in terror, and let them dash on to certain destruction—without making any attempt to stop them. Augusta lay in a dead swoon, and Jacquetta sat white as marble, perfectly still.

They were on the bridge; and the passengers shrunk to either side, in dismay, when, suddenly, a man, whose eagle eye caught sight of the faces within, uttered a wild shout, and springing forward, heedless of danger, seized the nearest horse by the bridle, and in spite of their mad plunging and rearing, held him in a grasp of iron for one moment. The next, a cry of horror broke from the crowd: he was down, trampled under the feet of the furious animals, but a dozen hands now held them fast; and, the next moment, Disbrowe was out of the carriage, forcing his way through the crowd to where the wounded man lay. Crushed, trampled, bleeding, a fearful spectacle, he lay there, with the pitying crowd bending over him.

"Is he dead?" cried Disbrowe, kneeling beside the bleeding form.

"No, my lord," said the man he addressed, touching his cap. "Not dead yet, but soon will be. Skull fractured, I think."

"He must be removed instantly," said Disbrowe, starting up. "Do any of you know him?"

No; no one did. He was a sailor, they thought, and, very likely, a stranger.

Even as he spoke, the wounded man's eyes opened, and fixed themselves on Disbrowe.

"Lelia—Lelia! Where is Lelia?" he cried,



That voice ! It reached Jacquetta where she sat ; and, the next moment, with a startled cry of grief and horror, she was bending over him.

“Oh, Alfred ! Oh, Heaven ! it is my father !”

“I’m done for, Lelia ! It’s all up with old Nick Tempest, at last,” he said, holding out his hand, with something like a smile.

Jacquetta wrung her hands.

“Oh, Alfred, can nothing be done ? Must he die here—in this dreadful place ?”

“Heaven forbid ! Here, my men, bring a cab instantly—will you ?”

As if by magic, one was found, and was beside him immediately. The wounded man was lifted in. Jacquetta, and a surgeon, who providentially happened to be among the crowd, entered after him, and drove off, while Disbrowe re-entered the brougham, where Augusta still lay insensible, and followed. And so the two mortal foes had met again.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

“All things hath an end.”—PROVERB.

“We are born ; we laugh—we weep—  
We love—we droop—we die.”—CORNWALL.

“AND there is no hope, Doctor ?”

“None, my lord ; he must die. No human power can save him now !”

“I knew it myself, and could have told you so,” said the wounded man. “When a man’s skull is fractured, he is not likely to go cruising round the world much longer. I say, Doctor, how many hours before I’m in port ?”

“You may possibly live four or five hours—not longer,” said the physician, as he arose to go.

“Humph ! short notice to settle one’s accounts ; but it must do, I suppose. Lelia !”

“Here, father,” she answered, kneeling beside him. “Shall I send for a clergyman ?”

“For a clergyman ! No. What do you suppose Captain Nick Tempest has to do with a clergyman ?”

Come here, my girl, and tell me; for the wrong your old father has done you, can you forgive him now?"

"From the bottom of my heart—as freely as I hope to be forgiven," she earnestly answered.

"And you, my lord—they say you are a lord now? We have not been very good friends hitherto; but will you shake hands with the rough old sailor before he goes?"

He held out his hand, and Disbrowe took it between both his.

"Then we are friends, my lord?"

"We are, with all my heart."

"Thank you. It was all my fault. I was a rough customer, I know; but the world and I were never on very good terms, and I got reckless, knocking about its sharp corners. It has given me some pretty hard raps, my lord, until it has made me what you see me now. But I am not likely to trouble it much longer. Lelia, you have been an actress since; are you one yet?"

"No, Captain Tempest," interrupted Disbrowe; "she is Lelia, the actress, no longer. A few days will make her Countess of Earnecliffe!"

"Ah!" said the captain, while his dull eye lit up. "A countess—my daughter—old Nick Tempest's daughter a countess!"

Something ludicrous in the notion seemed to strike him; and he laughed outright.

"Do not mind that, father—do not think of it. Remember how few are the hours you have to live," said Jacquetta, gravely.

"Long enough for what I have to do. Tell me, Lelia,—or, rather, do *you* tell me, my lord, were you ever engaged to be married to a certain Norma Macdonald?"

"Yes," said Disbrowe, surprised at the question.

"Well, why did you not marry her?"

"For many reasons, Captain. She refused me, and married another."

"Is she now in England?"

"Yes."

"I should like to see her. Send for her, Lelia."

"Why, father, do you know her?"

"No; but I should like to. Have you ever met her, Lelia?"

"Often, father. She is like a sister to me."

Again the captain laughed. Jacquetta turned to Disbrowe, with a look that plainly said she feared his brain was wandering. The captain saw it, and read its meaning.

"No, I am not insane, Lelia. I know what I am saying. Lelia, Norma Macdonald is your half-sister!"

"Father!"

"It is true. Listen: you know when you were a little child, your mother eloped, through the machinations of that accursed hag, Grizzle Howlett?"

"Yes."

"Lelia, it was with Randall Macdonald—*her* father! You both had the same mother!"

Jacquetta and Disbrowe were dumb with surprise.

"Ask this man—her father—if it is not true; and let him deny it if he dare. Lelia, you and Norma Macdonald are sisters!"

"I felt it—I knew it. I was sure we were not strangers!" said Jacquetta, in a low, breathless voice.

"This is most wonderful!" exclaimed Disbrowe. "I know, now, why Mr. Macdonald would never speak of Norma's mother. But to think that she and Jacquetta should be sisters! I wonder what Austrey will say?"

"Where is your little daughter, Lelia—where is Orrie?" asked the captain, after a pause.

"Here, in London; but not in the house at present. Would you like to see her?"

"Yes; I always liked the little one, somehow. How came she here?"

"Mr. De Vere brought her."

"Mr. De Vere, of Fontelle? Is he here, too?"

"Yes, he and his daughter."

"Ha! his daughter! By the way, that reminds me I have something to say about that daughter. 'Thereby hangs a tale.' She has appeared in trouble lately—has she not?"

"Trouble!" exclaimed Jacquetta, "she has been like a galvanized corpse for the last two years—dead in life!"

"Ah! just so! Well, I know the cause."

"You!" exclaimed Disbrowe.

"Yes, me; and I can minister to a mind diseased, too. Do *you* know the cause, my lord?"

"Yes."

"Then she thinks she has married her brother, does she not?"

Jacquetta uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Yes."

"Well, she may set her mind at rest, then; she has done nothing of the kind."

"What!"

"It is true. I have it from Till—old Till, you know, Grizzle's brother—and he ought to know, if any one does."

"Thank Heaven! Poor, unhappy Augusta! But are you sure, Captain Tempest?"

"Certain! Old Till will confirm the story, if you only threaten him with a little hanging!"

"Where is he to be found?"

"At the 'Sailor's Rest', St. Giles. You'll have no trouble in finding him. You see, old Grizzle knew about the marriage, and trumped up the whole story to frighten the young lady, and save herself."

"Well, but Augusta's husband himself acknowledged its truth."

"And he thinks it is true. You see, my lord, there were a number of other little urchins taken prisoner with the little De Vere at the same time—some of whom died, some were sent to another tribe, and some were kept. Young De Vere died a short time after being taken captive; but he was always a sickly little codger, Till says."

"Then she really married one of those captives?"

"Yes; but no relation of hers. His real name is Durand—Mark Durand; and he escaped just as Grizzle related. The young lady is all right, so far as marrying her brother is concerned. Find out Till, and he will tell you so, if you only frighten him properly."

"Heaven be praised for this! It will be new life to



Augusta. Captain Tempest, what a debt of gratitude he will owe to you!"

"To me? Nonsense! Give me a drink, Lelia—I am parched."

She held a drink to his lips, and he drank eagerly. He had spoken so rapidly that he had exhausted himself, and already he was beginning to sink.

"And Augusta was married?" said Jacquetta, in a low voice to Disbrowe.

"Yes; that was her secret. He was poor, and they were married in private. Grizzle told her that morning, you remember, he was her brother, and she believed her."

"Poor Augusta! Where is her—her husband now, I wonder?"

"I do not know. Can you tell us, Captain Tempest, where this Mark Durand is now?"

"I saw him in Paris three weeks ago; most probably you will find him there yet."

"How strangely all these things have come to light! How mysterious are the ways of Providence! Oh, father! if you had only told this long ago, how much misery it might have saved!"

"I did not know it long ago myself; though, if I had," said Captain Nick, in parentheses, "it would have been all the same, most likely. I knew Grizzle had some power over Miss De Vere; but what it was I didn't know until old Till, who came this voyage with me, babbled in his cups, and let the murder out. He'll confirm it, you'll see, for he's as arrant a coward as ever lived. I never had a particular love for the De Veres, and might have kept the secret still, if I had not been hipped to death in this fashion. However, better late than never—eh, Lelia? And so you are going to be a countess, my girl, though you *are* old Nick Tempest's daughter?"

"Dear father, do not think of these things, now. Do try and compose your mind for the dread hereafter you are hastening to. Remember how short are the hours you have to live."

"The last act of the drama—isn't it, Lelia? As for composing my mind, what good will that do? You don't

suppose I expect to go to heaven—do you? No, as I have lived, I will die; so say no more about it. Have you sent for your sister, Lelia?”

“Yes, father; she will be here directly.”

“And you—you will not leave me, Lelia, to the last—will you?”

“No, father.”

“Ah! I am glad you *can* say father; I like to hear it from your lips. Do you know you look strangely like your mother to-day, Lelia? There is the same look in your eyes I have often seen in hers. My poor lost Lelia! buried in the wide sea. Oh, that accursed wretch, Grizzle Howlet!”

“Do not think of her—do not speak of her. Here, drink this.”

It contained a narcotic, and gradually he fell into a troubled, feverish slumber. Still he held Jacquetta's hand, as though, even in sleep, he feared to lose her, and at intervals murmured, brokenly, the name of Lelia.

Disbrowe, in obedience to a whisper from Jacquetta, left the room in search of Augusta. He found her in her room, lying on a couch, still weak and faint from the effects of her recent fright.

As gently and tenderly as might be, he unfolded the truth; but before he had finished speaking she lay without life or motion on the floor, where she had sunk like a snow-wreath. Shocks of joy seldom kill, however; and he was too accustomed to see Augusta faint to be much alarmed by it now; so, bathing her temples and chafing her hands, he waited until she had recovered again.

“What is it—what have you told me?” she cried, clinging wildly to him.

“Good news, my dear Augusta; you may be happy once more.”

“And he is not—”

“Certainly not. You have been imposed upon from first to last by our fair friend, Madame Howlet. Cheer up, Augusta! Let me see you smile once more.”

“I have almost forgotten the way. But, oh, Cousin Alfred! if there should be some mistake; if the man—”

“This man is dying, Augusta, and in his sober senses;

so there can be none. To make ‘assurance doubly sure,’ however, I have sent my servant and a Bow-street runner in search of old Grizzle’s brother, who knows the whole affair; so, in a short time, his testimony will convince you. Your husband is in Paris, and I will telegraph immediately to the Minister of Police, whom I know, to find him for us, and send him here; so, my dearest cousin, we will soon see our stately ‘Lady Augusta’ smiling and happy once more.”

He smiled brightly himself as he spoke; but Augusta dropped her head on his shoulder, and burst into tears.

“I will leave you alone,” he said, gently. “When this man comes, I will send for you.”

As he passed from the room, he met Norma ascending the stairs.

“Has anything happened? You sent for me?” she said, with a startled look. “Jacquetta—”

“Is quite well; but an important matter has come to light, in which you are closely concerned, Perhaps I had better tell you before you go in. Captain Tempest is dying in the next room, and it was he desired to see you.”

“Captain Tempest! Oh, my lord! does he know—”

“No, he does not know your secret. But my dear Norma, what will you say when I tell you that you and Jacquetta are sisters?”

“Sisters! How? What do you mean, my lord?”

“That you had the same mother—Captain Tempest’s wife. Do you know your mother’s name, Norma?”

“It was Lelia. I do not remember her; but I saw it written in one of her books. But, oh, Lord Earncliffe! what have you told me? Captain Tempest’s wife!”

“Your father was never married, Norma; and now you know why he would never speak of your mother. You and Jacquetta are sisters. A dying man affirms it. Do you doubt it, Norma?”

She covered her face with her hands for a moment; and when she took them away she was deathly pale.

“No, my lord, strange as it seems, I yet do not doubt it. And this is why he wanted to see me? Oh, Alfred! I am glad—I am glad that I am Jacquetta’s sister!”

"And so am I. Shall we go in now?"

They entered together. Captain Nick still slept, but even the slight noise of their entrance aroused him; and as his eyes fell on Norma, he uttered a faint exclamation.

"Ah! you have come! Come close and let me look at you. Yes, yes; you are Lelia's daughter. You look more like your dead mother than *she* does. Are you willing to acknowledge Nick Tempest's child as your sister, young lady?"

"Willingly, joyfully!"

And the fervent clasp in which she held Jacquetta told how truly she spoke.

"Tell your father—tell Randall Macdonald—I forgave him at last. He was not so much to blame as the she-devil who forced them both to it. Will you shake hands, young lady, for your mother's sake?"

She laid both her white, delicate hands in his large, brown palms, and a bright tear fell with them.

"For me!" he said, with a look of wonder. "Ho! what noise is that? I ought to know that step."

A shuffling sound of feet was heard without. Disbrowe threw open the door, and old Till, in charge of a policeman, stalked doggedly in.

"Hallo, old comrade!" said the captain. "Well met! You did not expect, when we parted this morning, to find me on the road to Davy's locker so soon. Where's the lady, Lelia?"

Even as she spoke, Disbrowe entered with Augusta hanging, pale and trembling, on his arm.

"She is here. Now, my man, what is it you know concerning this young lady?" said Disbrowe.

"You may as well make a clean breast of it Till, for I have told already," said the captain. "Out with it!"

Still Till scowled at them in dogged silence from under his villainous brows.

"Tell, and you shall go free and unharmed—I pledge you my word and-honor. Refuse, and the walls of Newgate will hold you before an hour."

Old Till was, as Captain Nick said, a very white-livered hero, so he forthwith—rather sullenly, though—began the recital, adding that the father of young Durand was still



alive, one of the wealthiest and most eminent lawyers in New York. And having made a deposition to that effect, and further informed them that he might be known by a peculiar tattooing in India ink on his arm, done when he was a child, he was allowed to take his departure.

Captain Nick was sinking fast. He had exerted himself to speak and listen while Till was present; but now he fell back exhausted on his pillow, a cold perspiration oozing over his face, a dark livid ring encircling his mouth. His eyes wandered slowly over the faces gathered round him, and rested at last on that of Jacquetta.

"Going!" he said with a faint smile. "It is getting dark and cold, Lelia. Don't cry so. I will bring you no more squirrels to play with, as I used to do long ago—you were a child then, Lelia; now you are—"

"Father, father!" cried Jacquetta, through her fast-falling tears, as the hand she held grew cold, and a dull glaze crept over his eyes.

"My little Lelia!"

A strong shudder passed through his powerful frame, one arm was half-raised, and then dropped heavily by his side.

"Gone!" said Disbrowe, as he bent over him. "Come, Jacquetta, let us go; all is over now!"

And now, reader—my dear reader—draw a long breath of relief, as I do, for our tale is at an end. Perhaps, though, you would like one final peep behind the scene before the curtain descends to rise no more. If so it must be a very bird's-eye view, and very swiftly taken.

Look, then! One year has passed since the last act. And now the time is night; the scene, Disbrowe Park. It is more like a glimpse of fairyland than ever, this lovely night; for the whole stately mansion is one vast sheet of light. The beautiful fountains are sending vast jets of silver sparkling up in the serene moonlight, and the trees are bright with the many-colored lamps, that twinkle like myriads of fire-flies, and give the whole scene an air of enchantment. The laurel walk is one blaze of illumination, and sweet delicious strains of music rise, and fall, and float on the still night air. Carriage

after carriage rolls up the broad avenue, and throngs of magnificently-dressed ladies and stately gentlemen pass into the marble hall. Lady Earnecliffe has just returned from the "land of the free and the home of the brave;" has been presented at court; made a decided sensation; and to-night gives her first ball.

See her there in white velvet, frosted with seed-pearls, sparkling with jewels, and floating in filmy point-lace—the most bewitching, the most dazzling countess in the peerage—receiving her guests. And yet she is our own Jacquetta after all—the same sparkling little fairy as of yore. The short, dancing curls are of the old obnoxious hue; but a coronet becomes them wonderfully. The wicked gray eyes sparkle still with the old mocking light that was wont to madden a certain Captain Disbrowe, and the little rosebud mouth is wreathed with the same entrancing smile that once drove the dashing guardsman to the verge of despair. And there she stands, as bright and self-possessed, receiving her titled guests in her husband's superb drawing-rooms, as when she stood, cool and defiant, before him, that morning when he met her first at old Fontelle.

He is there, too—the Earl of Earnecliffe—handsome, graceful, and elegant as ever, watching her with a curious smile, as he thinks of the past. A happy man is Earl Earnecliffe—as indeed he ought to be, with such a rent-roll and such a wife.

There is Lord George and Lady Austrey—the former, languid, nonchalant, and complacent as he strokes his mustache; the latter, one of the belles of the room, and so proud and so fond of her handsome young husband, and a powerful-lunged young scion of the aristocracy at home—who, of late, has made his *début* into this vale of tears. And Lord George is so proud of that baby, though the feeling is mingled with a sort of deep awe, more particularly when it cries, which it sees fit to do pretty often; but no inducement can persuade him to handle it, "not being used to that sort of thing," as he informs its nurse.

Our dark-eyed friend, Orrie, is at school, and has a strong notion of growing up shortly, and marrying Frank.

That young gentleman still writes U. S. N. after his name, and is pretty much of the same notion himself; so it is very probable Miss Orrie will be Mrs. Francis De Vere some day, in the “fulness of time.”

It is a long step to New Jersey; but you and I, with our seven-league boots, can take it. At Fontelle still lives Mr. De Vere, happy in the happiness of his daughter and new-found son. And Mrs. Durand—how strange it seems to call Augusta that!—is as happy as the day is long; and feels it all the more after the fiery crucible through which she has passed.

Our old and estimable friend, Grizzle Howlet, having with her two sons, committed an atrocious robbery, suddenly found the old inn too hot to hold her, and decamped for the far West with Blaise—the hopeful Kit being caught, and sentenced to prison for life, and since then nothing has ever been heard of her; and so to both, *requiescat in pace*.

As for Mr. Rowlie and his cheery little helpmeet, they kept the “Mermaid” for many a day after that; and that pleasant hotel thrived and flourished like a green bay tree. And if ever you visit the remote and facetious region of New Jersey, good friends of mine, just make a pilgrimage to its ruins, which tradition saith are to be seen to this day. And so, reader, farewell.

THE END.





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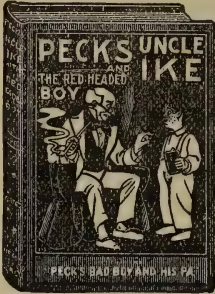
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